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THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NATIONAL DEFENCE

FROM THE 30TH OF JUNE TO THE 31ST OF OCTOBER 1870.

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BY

M. JULES FAVRE

DE L'ACADÉMIE FRANÇAISE.

TRANSLATED BY H. CLARK.

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PREFACE.

IMPARTIALITY, a rare virtue in ordinary times, is not to be expected in times of great political disturbance, during which party spirit prevents the talents or good qualities of an adversary from being recognised. In such times the most moderate and pacific find it difficult to guard against prejudice.

The French mind, pre-eminently impressionable, and therefore mobile and impetuous, is on this account but ill qualified to form a fair estimate of its own recent past. France is the less able to judge impartially of the men who played an important part in the events of 1870 and 1871, and above all, of those who directed the National Defence, because they were the irresponsible but conscientious and courageous inheritors of the faults of the Empire. We think that the judgment of the English nation may help to distinguish the dictates of truth from the emanations of party spirit in the numerous publications which have been issued during the last two years on the Franco-German contest. With this object in view we offer

to the English public a translation of M. Jules Favre's work.

History will render justice to the disinterestedness and firm principle of the author, whose great though painful mission will be better understood in the future. We think that every unprejudiced reader will recognise in his work the language of an honourable man, —a man more anxious for the triumph of truth than for his own justification, and scrupulously desirous to make known the smallest details which may serve to throw any light on events worthy of being remembered, and to give to all those men who took part therein the honour due to them.

It is with this conviction that we have attempted to translate into English the work of which our countrymen shall be the judges.

September 1*st*, 1873.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

From the 30th of June to the 4th of September, . . . 1

CHAPTER II.

The 4th of September, ... 46

CHAPTER III.

Diplomatic Negotiations after September 4th, . . . 73

CHAPTER IV.

Journey to Ferrières and Interview with Count Bismarck, . . 107

CHAPTER V.

Interior Organization of the Government—A Delegation sent to Tours, 144

CHAPTER VI.

Interior Policy—Commencement of Siege Operations—Departure of M. Gambetta, ... 168

CHAPTER VII.

Events of the month of October—Negotiations—Insurrectionary Plots—October the 31st, ... 183

PIÈCES JUSTIFICATIVES.

PAGE

1. Note on the Action of French Diplomacy which brought about the War of 1870, ... 243
2. Telegram from the Prussian Government relative to the refusal of the King of Prussia to continue negotiations with M. Benedetti with regard to the Candidature of Prince Hohenzollern, ... 254
3. Report to the King of Prussia by Lieutenant-Colonel Count of Radzivill, ... 255
4. Official Report upon what passed at Ems, . . . 257
5. Extract from a Letter from King William to the Queen of Prussia, 258
6. Process-verbal of the two Sittings of the Corps Législatif, held on the 4th September, ... 260
7. Proclamation of the Mayor of Paris, ... 266
8. Circular of the Minister of the Interior, . . . 267
9. Notice from the *Officiel* upon the Attitude of the Opposition, . 268
10. Circular of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, . . . 269
11. Circular of the Minister of the Interior, . . . 272
12. Letter from the Minister of the United States, . . 274
13. Letter from the Minister of the Swiss Confederation—Reply of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, ... 276
14. Letter from the Minister of the Swiss Confederation—Reply of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, ... 277
15. Letter from the Italian Minister—Reply of M. J. Favre, . 278
16. Letter from the Spanish Ambassador—Reply of M. J. Favre, . 279
17. Letter from Portuguese Ministry—Reply, . . . 280
18. Decree convoking the Electoral Assembly for October 16th, . 281
19. Order of the Day by General Trochu to the National Guard, . 281
20. Protest of the Institute against the Bombardment of Paris, . 282

PAGE

21. Circular of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, . . . 285

22. Circular of the Minister of the Interior, . . . 287

23. Proclamation of M. Louis Simon, ... 290

24. Despatch from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to M. Thiers, . 291

25. Note on M. Favre's Journey to Ferrières, . . . 294

26. Report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to his Colleagues, . 295

27. Speech of M. J. Favre to the Officers of the National Guard, . 306

28. Note to General Burnside, ... 307

29. Circular of Count Bismarck, ... 309

30. Reply of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, . . . 313

31. Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Mayor of Paris, 317

32. Letter from M. Michel Chevalier to Mr. Gladstone, . . 322

33. Second Letter from M. Michel Chevalier to Mr. Gladstone, . 326

GOVERNMENT OF THE NATIONAL DEFENCE.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN, on the 5th of September 1870, I undertook the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs, my first care was to inquire for any despatches which might acquaint me with the negotiations in hand.

A rapid examination sufficed to convince me, not only that we had no alliance, which I already knew, but that our diplomatists had made no serious effort to obtain any. The Director of Political Affairs, witnessing my surprise, proposed that I should ask information of the Minister whom I replaced, the Prince de la Tour d'Auvergne, who said he was quite willing to place himself at my service. I eagerly accepted this proposition; and here we meet with a fact not to be reconciled with the accusations of usurpation and violence so often directed against us.

The ex-Minister voluntarily offered, to an opponent who had replaced him, all the information he was able to furnish. The latter, moreover, did not fail in the consideration due to a worthy man, whom the course of events alone obliged him to succeed. When I arrived at the Quay d'Orsay, I would not enter the office of M. de la Tour d'Auvergne, who had left the Ministry, without having apprised him of my visit, and obtained his approval, thus obeying a feeling which all right-minded men will easily understand.

M. de la Tour d'Auvergne kindly told me that he was touched by this consideration; and I only name the fact, simple in itself, to establish the moral principle of a situation so strangely misrepresented by the passion of parties.

I do not think I am rash in affirming that the two men who now met were neither of them free to act otherwise than they did. Perhaps he whom fortune had removed from office felt relieved of an immense burden; but certainly he who entered on his charge, in a manner so unforeseen, did not hide from himself either the extent of his responsibility or his personal insufficiency. If he could, consistently with duty, have made a choice, the part of discharged Minister would have been preferred by him. M. de la Tour d'Auvergne had the goodness to remain with me three hours, and, with a courtesy and loyalty for which I expressed my deep gratitude, he furnished me with all the information in his power. The outlines were not encouraging.

France had undertaken the war, isolated in the midst of hostile Europe. The Government which had so madly precipitated her into this formidable venture had thought of no alliance, offered no treaty, foreseen no union; and more than that, it had striven to remain alone, and to league against itself powerful enemies. If, as cannot be doubted, blinded by its own infatuation, desirous of seeking, at any price, in the risks of a campaign, the prestige which was escaping it, the Government had seized the most detestable of pretexts to fall on Prussia, at the least it would have been only prudent not to have roused against itself all Germany.

Having decided upon the attack, it ought (and this would have been easy) to have chosen a field where it would encounter but one adversary, and to have avoided interesting the Southern States, which only asked to remain neutral. The Cabinet did precisely the contrary. One would have said that it studied to discourage those of our representatives who believed in the possibility of insuring this neutrality.

It was under the empire of such illusions that the fortunes of our country were to be hazarded. Others will tell what the assurances of the Minister of War were worth. Men may judge, by the overwhelming facts which I shall relate, of the conduct of our diplomacy. I asked M. de la Tour d'Auvergne what he thought of the rumours designedly set afloat with regard to the position of Austria, which, it appeared, had promised to prepare 300,000 men.

"This rumour," said the Prince, "is entirely unfounded. The Austrian Cabinet has been sounded. It has shown an interest which I believe to be sincere; but it brings forward as an objection the threatening attitude of Russia, which is not astonishing. An official treaty of alliance between Russia and Prussia appears improbable, but it is certain that engagements have been contracted. These engagements are explained by the ties of relationship which unite the Sovereigns of the two countries, and, above all, by the feeling of respect and confidence entertained by the Czar towards his uncle."

These details, I may say in passing, are a reply to the oft-repeated affirmations of a convention by which Russia has been said to be under an obligation not to suffer the dismemberment of our country. I have sought in vain the trace of so important a contract, and I am authorized to affirm that its existence is a fable. It is not impossible that, at the moment when the war was declared, the Emperor of Russia may have manifested his deep sympathy for France. This sympathy is real, and the loyalty of the Sovereign who expressed it adds greatly to its worth. Subsequently, as will be seen in the course of this narration, it took nearly the same form in an interview of the Czar with M. Thiers; but it was not irreconcileable with the policy followed by the Cabinet of St. Petersburg. Its neutrality became a decisive support for Prussia, since it checked Austria, and thus determined the neutrality of the other powers.

France thus stood alone; and its Government, which, by taking the offensive against Prussia, might have kept apart those States of Germany which dreaded the yoke of Count Bismarck, so acted as to unite them together, thus giving to the real enemy of France the help of all Germany. And yet how many times had the independent press and the opposition sought to warn them against this gross error! It is painful to read the speeches and newspaper articles published since the Mexican war and the desertion of Denmark. I do not think that at any other epoch future events have been predicted with more precision, neither do I believe that any power has ever existed which has provoked the disasters of the nation with a more criminal folly. But it seemed a prey

to confusion; those who pointed out the dangers were denounced as bad citizens, and the crowd, ever blind, received these calumnies with complaisance. The hired newspapers treated as friends of Juarez those orators and writers who, in the name of justice, of national interest and good sense, signalized the Mexican expedition as the most culpable of adventures, leaving us only the option between shame and disaster, and irremediably compromising our position in Europe. It will be remembered with what insults afterwards those were assailed who asked that Prussia, victorious over Austria, should be opposed with a liberal policy and the armament of the whole nation. They were reproached with weakening our military condition, while in reality they proposed to triple its strength. They were accused of betraying France, because they disavowed the doctrine of conquest which the tools of the Empire proclaimed so loudly, and from the consequences of which their ignorance has caused us to suffer so cruelly.

Hardly have men's minds returned to reason after the terrible lessons which have been inflicted on us; parties seem still to conspire for the purpose of perverting them. The violent passions let loose against the men who opposed the war at the price of their popularity, conspire to make the latter responsible for our misfortunes. They cannot be forgiven for the defeats they had no right to foresee; their firm attitude in peril is considered a crime, and as they struggled on until the last moment, it is found convenient to hurl upon them the odium of those faults which they tried in vain to avoid. Assuredly, history will not ratify these iniquitous recriminations; reverting to first causes, establishing the chain of events, she will easily distinguish the part that each has played. And when she asks herself the question, "Who shall be answerable before God, before our contemporaries, before posterity, for the disasters of 1870?" she will reply without hesitation, "The only guilty one is the Empire."

Moreover, it was the inevitable fate of the Imperial principle to corrupt France, and to give her up to the foreign invasion. By official candidatures it perverted men's consciences; by the abuse of personal power it enervated the

army and destroyed its discipline. The evil was so much the more dangerous in that nothing was revealed at the surface, where all was calm and equable. The Empire had foreseen nothing but success. In a few days it fell disgracefully, without understanding the essential and chief cause of its terrible fall, in which we shared. This cause it is not for me to bring to light in this place. In order to do this effectually, I should have to go back as far as the *coup d'état* of December the 2d, and to trace each act which marked the Imperial system. This task will be accomplished, but it is not the one I now take upon myself, and France does not require it. In the trouble which is agitating her, in the difficulties which she meets with in trying to recover herself, in the fatal divisions which disturb her, she can measure the extent of the evil which has been effected. Its reparation will require the energy and devotion of all. I believe I am making an appeal which will be responded to, when I furnish those who desire to assist in the work of reparation with information respecting some of the events which accompanied a catastrophe without parallel in history.

What I am about to relate are facts, in which I have taken part during that troublous time. I shall try to state them simply, inspired with no passion but love for the truth. I shall relate what I know, what I have seen, being less desirous of pronouncing judgment than of giving information—acting as a witness who, placed before his fellow-citizens, owes them sincerity before all things.

At the beginning of the month of July 1870, a month destined to be so disastrous in our history, no one could have foreseen the storm which was about to burst upon us. The Emperor appeared, by quitting the stormy region of personal power, to have resigned himself to bend before the requirements of public opinion. The Ministry of the 2d of January had been received with a hopefulness which was unanimous. Party was for the time forgotten, Europe was not adverse to it, and the country was satisfied. The success of the plebiscite exceeded the most sanguine expectations, and one would have thought it was about to regenerate the country by a firm and wise use of liberty. Abroad, there was no cause of disquietude, except

that arising from the Council, which was easily settled by taking no part therein. As for the occupation of Civita Vecchia, the public were indifferent on the subject. With these exceptions, the horizon seemed clear. The statesman whom the Imperial will had placed at the head of the Cabinet was led to think he merited this favour by the strong desire he had for it, and no one could reasonably fear that he would compromise it by an act diametrically opposed to the policy which had been the cause of his popularity. He had, in fact, always eloquently defended the unity of Italy, and even of Germany, he was the determined apostle of peace, and we cannot forget how, when pressed, upon a grave occasion, to declare his ministerial principles, he exclaimed, with emphasis, "Peace, peace, peace!"

On the eve of the month in which the war was declared, six days before the inexplicable challenge offered to Germany from the tribune by his colleague the Duke de Gramont, he gave expression to the same ideas in the discussion of the law of contingent; the Government, it is well known, proposed a reduction of 10,000 men upon the ordinary staff, and nothing could better have proved its confidence. M. Emile Ollivier added to this the authority of the following express declaration: "In reply to the Honourable M. Jules Favre, I beg to state that the Government has no disquietude whatever; that at no time has the peace of Europe appeared more insured. On whichever side we turn, we see no question likely to disturb our cordial understanding with the other European Courts."

And as I had insisted on the production of all the papers relating to German negotiations, the Minister said, "We have no documents to show you, because since we have been in power we have had no cause of disturbance."

At this moment, nevertheless, the candidature of the Prince of Hohenzollern to the throne of Spain was known by all Europe, and the Cabinet had decided that there was no need to preoccupy itself with the subject. It is no part of my plan to inquire by what sudden change of policy it came to alter its opinion, and to see an insult in a fact considered at first insignificant.

At the sitting of the 5th of July, some members of the Left

demanded an explanation upon the Hohenzollern question. Certain journals got possession of this, and signalized it as a provocation on the part of Prussia. The Corps Législatif was only slightly disturbed by it, when unexpectedly, without having either consulted or warned any of the members of the majority, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the opening of the sitting of the 6th of July, announced that he was about to reply to the interpellations, and read the following declaration:—

"The Government refrains from interfering with the internal policy of the Spanish nation, with which it desires to preserve amicable relations. But we do not think that respect for the rights of a neighbouring people obliges us to allow a foreign power, by placing one of its princes upon the throne of Charles the Fifth, to disturb, to our detriment, the present balance of power in Europe, and to imperil the interests and the honour of France. This supposition, we hope, will not be realized, and the wisdom of the German people and the friendship of the Spaniards afford us good ground for hoping that this eventuality will not be realized. If it prove otherwise, depending upon your support, gentlemen, and that of the nation, we all know how to do our duty without hesitation or weakness."

The reading of this declaration, unprecedented in diplomacy, was received with three bursts of applause from the majority. The Left remained silent, and when calm was restored M. Picard requested the documents necessary to enlighten the House upon so grave a situation. In the absence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who had left precipitately, the Minister of the Interior replied that he had a communication to make, and the majority applauded afresh. M. Cremieux protested against this imprudent course, which he rightly called a declaration of war.

"We take the responsibility of it," exclaimed M. Granier de Cassagnac.

M. Emile Ollivier protested in his turn against the supposition of a declaration of war. "The Government," said he, "desires peace, desires it ardently."

Vain assertions, which could deceive no one. The Government, if really desirous of peace, would not have violently disturbed it by a sudden change of policy, as much opposed to political propriety as to wisdom. A firm and prudent

negotiation would have enabled it to obtain the legitimate satisfaction which was due to it. Moreover, if the Government had been wise, it would, in reply to the interpellations of the Left Centre, have maintained that the candidature of the Prince Hohenzollern was no more disquieting on the 5th of July than it had appeared on the 30th of June, and that, in fact, France had no serious cause of alarm. That unfortunate measure would necessarily have failed in the face of the Spanish divisions, and if it had triumphed, it would have been an embarrassment to Prussia and no help.[1]

This was well known at the Tuileries, but there they dreamed of a brilliant exploit which should efface the disgrace of Mexico, and restore to the Imperial crown the lustre it had lost. Left to himself, the Emperor would have hesitated; his courtiers did not allow him to do so. At one moment, however, one might have believed that their criminal influence would lose its power. Justly preoccupied with the unforeseen peril to which their strange conceptions had given rise, the statesmen of Spain were in a state of agitation. Monsieur Olozaga, one of the most influential, and sincerely attached to France, solicited and obtained the withdrawal of the Prussian Prince. With this disappeared every pretext of war. M. Emile Ollivier announced it publicly in the lobbies of the Chamber. But such a solution upset the calculations of the ambitious, who, to satisfy their passions, recoiled at nothing. They surrounded the Emperor, and persuaded him that the withdrawal of the Prince was not sufficient, that, in addition to this, there must be a guarantee for the future from the King of Prussia. M. Benedetti received orders to ask this. What monarch, what man would have yielded to such a requirement? The refusal was inevitable and foreseen;—they expected and obtained it, and were then enabled to arrange that lamentable and tragic scene enacted in the Corps Législatif on the 15th of July.

[1] Such appeared to be the opinion of M. Bismarck, according to the report of M. Benedetti of May 11th, 1869. This is what our ambassador says about it:—"The President of the Council has proved to me that the sovereignty which may be offered to Prince Leopold could be but of a short duration, and would expose him to yet more dangers than disappointment." M. de Gramont himself partook of the same sentiment, for, in his private letter to M. Benedetti of the 7th of July 1870, he said:—"As for the Prince, his reign in Spain will not last a month."

I wish it were possible for me to transcribe, without omitting a word, the verbal process of this memorable and fatal sitting. This was the crowning act of the Empire, and its most overwhelming condemnation; it proves how the destiny of a great country may be perverted when delivered into the hands of one man, before whose power those who ought to control it only bend submissively.

Never did Ministers show more wilful ignorance or contempt for the truth, never did they meet with a fuller complicity from a parliamentary majority. In the sitting of the 6th of July M. Emile Ollivier had said—"We do not wish for war, we do not seek war, our dignity as a nation alone preoccupies us.

"If at any time we come to believe that war is inevitable, we shall not engage in it until we have asked and obtained your concurrence.

"A discussion will then take place, and if you do not adopt our opinion, you are at liberty to express your own, as we live under a parliamentary administration."

The engagement was entered into; it arose from the nature of things. How has it been fulfilled? By what examination, by what reflection, by what preparation was this important resolution preceded, which was to decree the death of hundreds of thousands of victims, the ruin of numerous provinces, and all the horrors attendant upon carnage and destruction, besides the dismemberment of one of the States precipitated one against the other by so blind an aberration?

The *Journal Officiel* replies: "Seven or eight hours have sufficed; an affirmation from the Ministry without proof, three vain attempts of the Opposition to speak, interrupted at every phrase by insults, the deliberation of an irresponsible Commission with closed doors have done the rest, and when ten voices only protested against this abandonment of all prudence, all reason, of all political independence, murmurs and invectives met them. The majority, trembling with passion, denounced as bad citizens those who would have saved their country, if their advice had been taken."

At the opening of this sitting of the 15th of July, M. Emile Ollivier read a statement decreed in Council, which explained that neither wishing to wound the susceptibilities of Spain,

nor to blame the Prince of Hohenzollern, who was supported by Prussia, the French Government had addressed itself to the Cabinet of Berlin, which had declined all responsibility respecting an affair to which it declared itself an entire stranger.

The French Government ordered its ambassador to put himself in communication with the King of Prussia, who was at Ems. The King of Prussia, in his turn, announced that he had only been consulted by the Prince as head of the family. Learning afterwards his withdrawal, which happened during the course of these interviews, he gave his approbation, but would not guarantee his direct and personal action for the future.

In spite of this refusal, the French Government was still disposed to negotiate, when yesterday it learnt (I cite literally) "that the King of Prussia had notified to our ambassador, by an aide-de-camp, that he would not receive him again, and that, in order to give to this refusal an unequivocal character, his Government had communicated it officially to the Cabinets of Europe.

"We learn, at the same time, that M. the Baron de Werther had received orders to leave, and that armaments were preparing in Prussia. Under these circumstances, to make any further attempt for reconciliation would have been a forgetfulness of all dignity, and an imprudence. We have neglected nothing to avoid a war; now, we must prepare ourselves to sustain that which is offered to us, leaving to each one his share of responsibility."

To this declaration was joined a demand for an advance of fifty millions, of which the majority hastened to vote the urgent necessity. Many members of the Left rose in opposition, notwithstanding the insults of the Right and Centre. M. Thiers ascended the tribune. In order to form an idea of the settled opposition against which he had to struggle, it is necessary to read his harangue, which was incessantly interrupted by jeers and insults. Vainly he demanded attention, pleading the exceptional gravity of the debate; he reminded them of the violence of the Chamber which imposed silence on him in 1866; he showed there was no serious pretext for war, that its only cause was a fault of the Cabinet, that, above all, the despatches ought to be made known, that so important a

resolution ought not to be taken upon the evidence of a few telegrams coming from our agents; he exhausted himself in patriotic and talented efforts. The invectives were redoubled.

"Offend me, insult me," cried he; "I am ready to endure anything to spare the blood of my compatriots, which you are ready to shed so imprudently. You will not reflect for a moment, you will not demand the contents of the despatches, upon which your judgment ought to be founded. I tell you, gentlemen, that you do not fulfil the duties which are imposed upon you."

"Keep your advice; we do not require it," exclaimed M. Jérôme David.

M. the Marquis d'Andelarre joined M. Thiers in demanding the despatches. M. Emile Ollivier refused them haughtily. "You ask," said he, "the communication of the despatches; it has already been given you: it was contained in our statement."

M. Gambetta was not satisfied with this reply. "It is not by extracts," said he, "it is not by allusions, but by a direct and authentic communication, that you ought to gain the House; it is a question of honour: we ought to know in what terms Prussia has dared to speak of France."

In reply, M. Ollivier tried to limit the debate, and show to the House that the requisite proof of the offence had been given; but in support of his assertion he had nothing to produce but the telegrams of his agents. "I have reminded you," said he, "that the King of Prussia has refused to receive our ambassador; and in order that this act should not appear inconsistent, as it otherwise might have done, and to give it an unequivocal character, his Government has officially announced this decision to the Cabinets of Europe, which assuredly it would not have done in the case of every audience refused by the King to an ambassador. I have in my possession two despatches from two of our agents.

"The first is as follows:—

"'A telegram has been communicated to me from Count Bismarck, announcing the refusal of King William to engage himself, as King of Prussia, never to give his consent to the candidature of the Prince Hohenzollern should this question

be again brought forward; and also the refusal of the King, in consequence of this demand, to receive our ambassador.'

"The other despatch runs thus:—

"'I think it my duty to transmit to you almost literally the despatch telegraphed by the Count Bismarck. After the withdrawal of the Prince Hohenzollern was officially announced by the Government of Spain to the French Government, the French ambassador requested his Royal Highness the King, at Ems, to authorize him to telegraph to Paris to the effect that his Majesty would engage himself to refuse his consent if ever the Princes should reconsider their decision.

"'His Majesty declined to receive the ambassador again, and informed him, through an aide-de-camp, that he had no further communication to make.'"

The language of the King has always been to this effect:—

"I do not wish to interfere. I do not wish to bias in any way the decision of the Prince Hohenzollern. If he wish to withdraw, let him do so; I shall not oppose him; I will enter into no engagement upon the matter."

But led to explain himself more clearly upon the pretended insult offered our ambassador, the Minister was forced to recognise that the despatches of M. Benedetti made no mention of it. I give them as they appear in his speech:—

"EMS, *July* 13, 4.25 P.M.

"The King has received the reply of Hohenzollern; it is from the Prince Antoine, and announces to his Majesty that the Prince Leopold, his son, has resigned his candidature for the throne of Spain. The King authorizes me to make known to the Emperor's Government that he approves this resolution. The King charged one of his aides-de-camp to communicate the following to me, which I give in his own words:—His Majesty having made an announcement on the subject of the assurance which we claim for the future, I solicited a last interview to repeat and develop the observations which I presented to him this morning.

"On my requesting a fresh interview, the King sent to inform me that he was unwilling to renew the discussion respecting the assurances we require for the future, with regard to which

he still adhered to the declaration he had made to me in the morning, of which you already have the substance in my last telegram."

"*July* 13, 1870, 10.30 A.M.

"I have asked the King to allow me to announce to you, in his name, that if the Prince Hohenzollern renews his claim, he would interpose his authority and prevent it.

"The King absolutely refused to authorize me to transmit such a declaration. I strongly insisted, but without succeeding in shaking the fixed determination of the King.

"The King terminated our interview by saying that he could not, and would not, take upon himself such an engagement; that he must in this case, as in every other, reserve to himself the liberty of consulting circumstances."

Thus all may be reduced to a first refusal of the King to enter into an engagement, for the future, to oppose the impossible return of an abandoned candidature; and a second refusal, to recommence a discussion already exhausted in two conferences. As to the pretended despatch of Prussia, which made known these refusals to the Cabinets of Europe, it is mentioned in the telegrams of our agents; the Minister does not appear even to know the text, and, at all events, is not willing to communicate anything to the Chamber.

So exorbitant a pretension was inadmissible. I therefore ascended the tribune to contest it. I essayed to prove briefly that the facts known to the Chamber furnished no plausible reason for a declaration of war, and that, moreover, no justification had been made. I added,—

"Where is the official despatch? Where is the report of the conference in which our ambassador recognises an intended insult to our nation? That is what we ought to examine. Very well. Nothing has been brought to this tribune, if we except a few telegrams; and it is not upon the authority of telegrams that a question of peace or war ought to be settled. The Chamber ought to see the despatches, and I place upon the table a proposition which I ask to be put to the vote. I am not willing to accept the responsibility of a vote obtained from us while in total ignorance of what we ought to know."

The proposition ran thus:—"We request the communication

of the despatches, especially of those in which the Prussian Government notifies its resolution to foreign Cabinets."

Notwithstanding the observations, full of force and wisdom, made by M. Buffet, the Chamber rejected this proposition by 159 votes against 84, and immediately retired to the bureaux.

I can only speak of what passed in mine. There the discussion was short and sad. Freer there to discuss than at the tribune, I strongly contested the ministerial policy, and did not hide the sinister forebodings with which it inspired me. Notwithstanding the disfavour which my opinion encountered, no fact was brought forward to oppose it. My colleagues replied to me by vague declarations of confidence. I insisted particularly upon two points which it was difficult to refute,—the fact that we had no allies, and the danger of placing the chief command in the hands of the Emperor.

Resolved to rid myself of all responsibility, I tried to justify the conviction which I had of the inevitable reverses that awaited us. I encountered neither enthusiasm nor anger, but a settled resolution, which they judged useless to invest with the authority of reason.

At half-past nine in the evening, the sitting was resumed; and the Marquis de Talhouet read, in the midst of a profound silence, the too famous report, of which the following extracts contain the chief points:—

"M. the Minister of War has maintained, in a few words, the urgent necessity of the required loans, and his categorical explanations have shown us that, prompted by a wise foresight, the two administrations of War and the Marine are prepared to face, with promptitude, the exigencies of the situation.

"Your Commission then had an interview with the Keeper of the Seals and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

"Diplomatic statements have been communicated to us; on these texts remarkably clear and complete comments have been furnished.

"We have responded to the wish of the Chamber by a minute inquiry into all these political details. We have the satisfaction of telling you that the Government, from the commencement of this affair, from the first step in the nego-

tiation to the last, has loyally pursued the same end. Thus the first despatch addressed to our ambassador, who had gone to Ems to have an interview with the King, concludes with the following phrase, which indicates that the Government had clearly put forth its legitimate claim. 'In order that this withdrawal may produce its effect,' wrote M. de Gramont to M. Benedetti, 'it is necessary that the King of Prussia take part in it, and give us the assurance that he will not again authorize the candidature.

"'Will you repair immediately to the King, to request of him this declaration?' . . .

"The French ambassador only received from King William the confirmation of a fact which gave no guarantee for the future.

"Notwithstanding these facts, too grave already, your Commission received communication of the despatches coming from several of our diplomatic agents, the terms of which are uniform, and confirm, as has been declared in the Corps Législatif and in the Senate, what Count Bismarck officially made known to the Cabinets of Europe: That His Royal Highness has refused to receive the ambassador of France again, and informed him, through one of his aides-de-camp, that he had no further communication to make.

"At the same time we obtained proof that, from the morning of the 14th July, while the negotiations were progressing, important movements of troops were arranged on the other side of the Rhine.

"The feeling produced by the examination of these documents is, that France cannot tolerate the insult offered to the nation; that our diplomacy has fulfilled its duty in circumscribing the legitimate claims within a limit which Prussia could not evade, as she had hoped.

"We ask you to vote these measures, because, as instruments of defence, they are prudent; and as the expression of the national voice, they are wise."

After the reading of this report, the majority violently insisted upon putting it at once to the vote. M. Gambetta with difficulty gained a hearing. In a few clear words he pointed out the equivocation which the Cabinet and the Com-

mission could not explain away. The Prussian despatch is the only ground of a declaration of war. But as for this despatch, where is it? Who has seen it? How is it possible to judge if we have not the text? If we are unable to judge, how can we use it as a torch with which to kindle a deplorable conflagration? Has the Commission seen the despatch that has been sent to all the Cabinets of Europe? "I declare," replied M. de Gramont, "that I forwarded it to the Commission, who examined it."

M. the reporter confirmed this grave assertion; yet a few minutes after he formally denied it, adding, "We have had the despatches of four or five of our representatives at the different Courts of Europe, who reproduce this document almost in the same terms.

"It is not, then, the despatch itself, but an account of it sent by our agents, which the Commission saw; and if M. Talhouet spoke the truth, M. de Gramont deceived the Chamber."

M. Gambetta was not satisfied with these replies; he desired more exactitude.

"Is it true," said he, "that the despatch has been sent to all the Cabinets of Europe, or merely to those of South Germany? That would make an essential difference."

"However that may be, it is your duty not only to communicate it to the Commission, but to all the members of this Chamber, to France and to Europe."

After having tried to envenom the debate by useless insults to the Left, that Minister, who in this sitting had boasted of decreeing war, with a light heart, was nevertheless forced to confess that he only knew the despatch by hearsay; that it was upon vague and incomplete information that the Committee had formed its opinion, and the Chamber was about to vote.

"I cannot understand," said he, "how any one can doubt and discuss so incontrovertible a fact, a fact already twice explained, how a mind so eminent and lucid as that of the Honourable M. Gambetta can again repeat, 'The despatch. Give us the Prussian despatch to prove that we have been insulted!' Who has spoken of a Prussian despatch? When, to prove an insult done to France, have we invoked the protocols and despatches, more or less mysterious?"

Our language has been very different.

"We said to you, 'Even while we are discussing, there is a fact, public in Europe, which no ambassador, no journalist, no diplomatist, no politician can ignore, namely, that according to the reports from Prussia, our ambassador has not been received by the King of Prussia, who refused, through an aide-de-camp, to listen, for the last time, to a courteous, moderate, and conciliatory exposition of a courteous, moderate, conciliatory demand, the justness of which is incontestable.'"

In truth we seem to be dreaming while reading such a speech. A heavy heart betrays itself under the appearance of a detestable rhetoric and pitiable contradictions, which ought to have arrested the orator himself in his passionate harangue. What! it is no longer a question of a Prussian despatch; yet a few hours before, at the same meeting, it was the very existence of this despatch which formed the basis of the ministerial arguments. It was this despatch, sent to all the Cabinets of Europe, which constituted the offence. It was this despatch whose existence M. de Gramont had affirmed when he had said a few minutes before, "I have sent it to the Commission, who have read it." Now there is no such thing as a despatch; they no longer trouble themselves about it. It is a report running through Europe which constitutes the offence. Because our ambassador, according to a Prussian account, was not received by the King, France is to be delivered to the horrors of war! But there is something more reliable than the anonymous account repeated by journalists, diplomatists, and politicians; it is the report of your ambassador, the Minister! This is the official, authentic, and only reliable one, yet this account does not say a word about the pretended insult; it quietly announces that the King of Prussia refused a third edition of observations which he had already twice heard, and, while your ambassador does not complain, while you are unable to cite a single word that attacks France, you dare to declare that we ought to take your word for it that the question is one of honour—that without reflection, without examination, without delay, the scourge of war must be let loose upon your country, thus consummating its ruin! Ah! you were right in saying nothing like it has been known in history, and God grant that to the remotest ages there never

may be a Minister capable of carrying a vote by such artifices, nor a Chamber capable of giving it, and with it the fortune of the nation. After the speech of the Minister of Justice, M. Ernest Picard, M. Glais-Bizoin, M. Horace de Choiseul, M. Grévy tried, but in vain, to make some observations. Their voices were drowned in a tempest of furious clamour. Grant a few moments for the examination of facts! This was not to be thought of! The Minister had said, "Vote, vote, vote!" There was nothing to do but to obey. At midnight two hundred and forty-five voices against ten voted for the loan, and the powerless protests of the deputies of the Left were lost amid the applause of the majority.

Thus ended the first act of this terrible drama. To-day, regarding it through the sanguinary medium of past events, we can hardly understand so much levity on the one hand and so much blindness on the other. It seems as in a mirage, that this great and deplorable scene is reconstructed under our eyes, that we are actors in it, that we roll back the inevitable fate about to engulf us. We obtain from the Assembly an attentive moment, an hour of reflection, which would have been our salvation. What indeed would have been the effect if the majority had studied the facts of the case? The declaration of war would have been impossible. They would have learnt that no offence was intended towards our ambassador, that the King of Prussia had listened to his message in two conferences, which he was not obliged to have granted; if he thought proper to refuse a third interview, there was no intention of wounding our ambassador, who had not for a moment dreamed of considering himself hurt.

I admit, though to my mind this is a disputable point, that the candidature of Prince Hohenzollern for the throne of Spain might have constituted a *casus belli*, but the withdrawal that was made gave a check to the Prussian policy; the honour and interests of France were no longer at stake, and here she ought to have stopped. To ask of the King a direct engagement in case of an improbable event, was to exact an impossible condition, and more than that, all the negotiation either proves great carelessness or neglect of proprieties, or a determined

resolution to seek a pretext for a rupture. It is not by a puerile superstition of etiquette that international traditions have maintained the rigour of diplomatic forms. These forms constitute a guarantee of moderation and prudence; they prevent those susceptibilities which direct contact would produce; they oblige a slowness of action which is salutary; they leave behind them valuable traces, rendering exaggeration and error impossible. The observation of them is therefore the bounden duty of statesmen, their violation a fault and danger. Nothing proves this fact better than the unjustifiable conduct of the Imperial Cabinet.

If it had proceeded regularly, instead of hurling an unprecedented provocation from the tribune, if it had sought an explanation, which would have been accorded (the withdrawal of the Prince taking place at the same time), no susceptibility would have been wounded, and the difficulty would have disappeared of itself.

But instead of pursuing this natural and simple course, it ordered our ambassador to put himself in direct communication with the King, thus exposing itself to the serious difficulties which extra-official communications usually entail.

The King, for the discussion of this affair, might have referred M. de Benedetti to M. de Bismarck, by whom State affairs were usually transacted; nevertheless he granted several interviews, and then sent to say that he thought their continuation useless. In acting thus, had he any intention of offending?

Our ambassador, who was supposed to be offended, and whose opinion is of some weight, did not believe it. If this suspicion had presented itself to his mind, it was speedily dissipated; for having expressed to the King, who left the same day for Coblentz, a desire to take leave of him, the latter sent to inform him that he would receive him at the station in a room reserved for him. This interview took place, and was perfectly courteous. M. Benedetti had the opportunity of renewing his request, to which the Sovereign replied that he had nothing more to communicate, that if there were any further negotiations, they would be undertaken by his Government. This our ambassador made known to M. de Gramont by a despatch from Ems, dated July 14, 1870. I question whether this had ever been placed in the hands of the Commission.

This, then, was the offence which M. le Marquis de Piré, with his accustomed vivacity, which, though sincere, was in this case strangely exaggerated, did not hesitate to compare with the blow given by the Dey of Algiers with his fan.

As to the famous despatch sent to the Cabinets of Europe, invoked first by M. Ollivier, confirmed by M. de Gramont, who had given it to the Commission to read—it never existed. The Chancellor of the Northern Confederation sent a telegram to all the Southern Cabinets, to the effect that the matter was at an end, that the King approved of the withdrawal of the Prince, that he refused to engage himself for the future, and had stated to the French ambassador that it was superfluous to insist further. It is unnecessary to show how such news would affect the Southern Cabinets. They were informed in terms that could not possibly create ill-feeling, since they were the exact reproduction of facts that had in no wise offended our ambassador.[1]

Now let history, let opinion, judge the men who, under such circumstances, forced their country into war, for which, notwithstanding their assertions, they were unprepared.

Six days after, on the 21st of July, the Corps Législatif broke up. Its President appealed to the courage and patriotism of our army, confiding to it the fate of the country. It would have been wiser to have protected it by independent deliberations. Nevertheless, one must recognise that if public emotion were great, universal confidence was still greater. In presenting the Senate to the Emperor, M. Rouher had uttered these flatteries, worthy of another age:—

"If the hour of peril is come, the hour of victory is near. Soon will our grateful country award to its children the honours of triumph; soon, when Germany shall be freed from the domination which oppresses it, when peace shall be restored to Europe by the glory of our arms, your Majesty, who two months ago received for himself and his dynasty fresh assurance of the national good-will, your Majesty will devote himself afresh to the great work of amelioration and reforms, whose realization

[1] See the text of the telegram sent by the Prussian Minister of Foreign Affairs—"Pièces justificatives," at the end.

will suffer no other delay than that which you employ in conquest. France knows this, and the genius of the Emperor guarantees it."

In thus expressing himself, the orator shocked good taste and decorum, but he cherished the delusion, then general, that there could be no other issue but success; to have doubted it would have been the act of a bad citizen.

It was under the influence of this sentiment, and also that of distrust, that the majority, in the sitting of July 16, rejected the motion, demanded by M. Picard and by M. de Latour du Moulin, for the urgency of the proposed law referring to the reorganization of the National Guard. Subsequently, that of M. de Jouvencel upon the francs-tireurs shared the same fate. Not one of this compact phalanx of deputies, so accustomed to follow the Government, was willing to allow the possibility of an unhappy result. "There is no danger," said M. Jérôme David. "Since you of the Left pretend," cried another orator, "that circumstances are so perilous, wait until the impetuous flight of our eagles has rendered them glorious."[1]

Alas! we had not long to wait. War was declared on the 19th of July. The 5th of August, a wild rumour spread through Paris, causing an indescribable commotion. A great victory of Marshal MacMahon was announced—40,000 prisoners, among whom was Prince Frederic Charles, flags, cannon, ammunition of all kinds, had fallen into our hands. As in the twinkling of an eye, flags waved in every street, enthusiastic excitement reached almost to madness. The deception was a terrible one. An audacious swindler wanted to raise the Bourse. We had soon to descend from Olympus. The lesson was severe, but not to be compared with that reserved for us forty-eight hours later.

Sunday, the 9th, at eight o'clock in the morning, I was going down the Rue d'Amsterdam, my heart agitated by sad forebodings, when a friend stopped me; he was pale and haggard. "We are beaten," said he; "the army of MacMahon is routed, Froissard is beaten, Failly beaten, Alsace is invaded, and our first line of defence is broken." Stunned by this

[1] M. de Piré at the sitting of July 21.

communication, I hastened to the house of a friend to assure myself of its correctness, and to decide upon a course of action. The only one which appeared reasonable to me was to urge the assembly of the Corps Législatif, and, investing it with sovereign authority, to recall the Emperor. It was not until two o'clock that I was able to assemble some of my colleagues. I asked several times to see M. Schneider, the President. He was not at home. I did not see him until nearly five o'clock. I went into his cabinet with several of my colleagues, most of whose names I forget. Messrs. Pelletan and Jules Simon were among them. I assumed the task of clearly placing before him these two questions,—the convocation of the Corps Législatif, and the recall of the Emperor. Upon this second question I was strongly of the opinion which I had always expressed, especially on the 15th of July, in my bureau. I rapidly enumerated the reasons which had always made me foresee a disaster.

My friends know that in this respect my opinion has never varied. Since 1864 I have foreseen a war with Prussia; and when we allowed the opportunity of 1866 to escape, I never doubted that, if ever we engaged in war, it would be to our ruin. Giving the Emperor the chief command was a crime against France. I had expressed this opinion to my colleagues before the event so cruelly proved its justice. I repeated it at the first burst of misfortune, when the least hesitation would render the mischief irreparable. In thus acting, I was not influenced by party spirit, but by the spirit of a Frenchman. I entreated my adversaries to seize the power, although certain they would use it contrary to my ideas. I had no reason to hide my opinion regarding the Corps Législatif; the official candidates who composed it did not represent the country, nevertheless it was the legal authority, and I submitted to it without ulterior motive. I only asked of it one thing, namely, immediate and vigorous action. The incapacity of the Emperor and his Ministers had brought us to the verge of ruin; their authority must be annulled. The retreat of the Cabinet and the downfall of the Emperor seemed to me the only means of safety. I felt sure, however, that this last resolution, with which they might agree when too late, would appear extreme. But I formally requested that supreme command should be

delivered to a marshal, chosen by an executive committee, taken from the majority of the Chamber, charged with nominating fresh Ministers and providing means of defence.

I explained myself with great firmness, and, notwithstanding its boldness, my language provoked no sign of malevolence, nor even of astonishment, from my honourable interlocutor. He conceded without hesitation the convocation of the Corps Législatif. As to my proposition relative to the Emperor, he strongly opposed it, affirming it to be contrary both to prudence and the constitution. Notwithstanding their incontestable gravity, events appeared to him in no wise to justify such exceptional measures. He did not wish to judge any of the men whom the laws of the country had placed above his control, but he believed my charge against them to be altogether exaggerated. The army had met with reverses, but was not destroyed. Its chiefs were worthy of our entire confidence. We ought now to guard against all those emotions, so natural in themselves, and apply ourselves to the restoration of tranquillity, without which defence would be powerless.

I tried to refute his objections, and knowing full well that I had not changed his opinions, I begged him to report our conversation to the Regent and the Ministers. "Do not mistake my intentions," said I to him, "my only desire is to save France. We prove this, my friends and I, by putting ourselves completely in the background. We are convinced that the Corps Législatif ought to take the power; it is enough to say that we do not covet it for ourselves. We only ask to serve, but we do desire chiefs who are not the representatives of ineptitude and treason."

"That is to say," replied the President, "you consider that the Imperial dynasty is incompatible with the salvation of the country."

"Certainly," said I.

"Well, for my part, I consider them to be closely allied."

"Alas!" said I, in parting, "a future not far distant will show which of us is deceived."

The next day, Monday, the deputies of the Opposition assembled in great numbers, in one of the bureaux of the

Chamber. Those of the majority began to pour into the Palace. The agitation was extreme, and the irritation against the Ministry general. They listened for every report, and anxiously inquired for any fresh news. The defenders of the Cabinet were few, but formed the centres of eager groups. They affirmed that the evil was inconsiderable. Our troops had struggled against very unequal numbers, had performed prodigies of valour; the losses of the enemy had been enormous, and soon we should take a glorious revenge.

These assertions were received with avidity and sadness. The confidence of those who uttered them did not convince their uneasy auditors. They impatiently awaited the sitting of the morrow. During this time the Opposition was deliberating upon the measures which it was necessary to take. The first was the arming of the country. Until then, the Ministry had obstinately refused this, thus enraging a great number of the citizens of Paris. The paid bands, which a few days before had traversed the streets shouting "À Berlin!" were succeeded, in almost all quarters, by menacing groups who demanded arms. The least imprudence might bring on a fatal collision: prompt measures were necessary. The Minister of the Interior had, that very morning, published a decree limiting the reorganization of the Parisian National Guard to a recruiting of men from the age of twenty to forty. This project would furnish 140,000 combatants. The population looked on this as derisive. It was agreed at our meeting that a deputation should repair to the Minister to request a fuller measure. The interview was painful. M. Chevandier de Valdrôme, whilst defending his schemes, referred to the vigilance of the Government. "Recall that word," cried one of us impetuously; "cast your eyes upon the map, and see how much of France you have already given up; we do not want the rest to share the same fate." The deputation, on its departure from the Ministry, as on its arrival, had to pass through a dense crowd of people, who cried "La levée en masse;" some others, "La déchéance." The deputation reported the results to the meeting of the Opposition, which decided that, at the next day's sitting, two propositions should be presented—one having for its object the armament of the

French National Guard; the other the nomination of a commission of fifteen members, invested with powers of governing and of defending the country.

The first was worded as follows:—

"Seeing that the enemy has invaded our territory:

"That if our army is on the alert, ready to repel him, it is the duty of every citizen to aid it by his individual efforts:

"That he has the right to claim arms for the accomplishment of this duty:

"Seeing that, by the avowal even of the Minister of War, the enemy is marching on Paris:

"That, in presence of such a peril, it would be a crime to refuse each citizen of the capital the weapon necessary for him to protect his home.

"That the entire population asks to be armed and enrolled in the National Guard, and to elect its chiefs:

"The Chamber decrees,—

"That arms shall be immediately distributed in the mayoralty of each arrondissement of the city of Paris to all the able-bodied citizens inscribed on the electoral list.

"The National Guard shall be reorganized in France according to the law of 1851."

The text of the second was as follows:—

"Seeing that, notwithstanding the heroism of our army, the soil of our country is invaded, the safety of France, the duty of defending it to the last, require the Corps Législatif to take the direction of affairs.

"The Chamber decrees that an executive committee, chosen from its midst, shall be invested with full powers of government to repel the foreign invasion."

The next day, Tuesday, 9th of August, the President Schneider took the chair at one o'clock, and gave M. Ollivier permission to speak. The latter, without apparent emotion, commenced an exposition of facts to justify the acts of the Ministry. But the Assembly listened to him with marked disfavour. The violent interruptions of the Left no longer raised a storm. It listened with sufficient patience to the reading of our two propositions. M. Granier de Cassagnac

alone protested against the second, and asked the Government to bring its authors before the Council of War. This denunciation met with the success it merited. The Ministry had no longer the force to do harm. Unwilling to resign, it was crushed by the reprobation of the Chamber, and fell miserably. The adoption of an equivocal order of the day, proposed by M. Duvernois, deprived it of its power, and at the end of the sitting M. Ollivier announced that the Count de Palikao was charged to form a Cabinet. The Corps Législatif had yielded to public opinion and its own feeling of repulsion to the Ministry in overthrowing it. But it recoiled from the accomplishment of the duty which events imposed upon it. One hundred and ninety voices, against fifty, rejected the proposition of forming a commission. Upon hearing this vote proclaimed, M. Gambetta exclaimed, "You will have to come to it." "Yes," replied I in my turn, "and when you do it will be too late."

Events proved only too well that we were justified in saying this.

But we have cause to remember the incident, and to bring it forward as the peremptory refutation of the calumnies directed against those who have been called the men of the 4th of September. They are regarded as conspirators, seeking the success of their party amidst the misfortunes of the country; as ambitious adventurers who, for the gratification of their vanity, wanted at any price to seize the reins of power. I appeal to men of good faith; it is their judgment I solicit.

If the Republicans of the Assembly had been prompted only by animosity against the Empire, and by the desire to overthrow it in order to succeed it, they had only to keep in the background and remain silent; fortune would have done their work for them; they knew this, and foretold it. But they rejected this selfish, captious policy. They resolutely opposed the war, which in their opinion sealed the fate of the Empire. When, at the first shock, the Empire fell mortally wounded by our reverses, they threw themselves into the breach, not to seize power, but to give it to their adversaries and to serve under their orders. From the 9th of August until the 4th of September they never ceased their efforts, though

always misunderstood; never allowed a day to pass without warning the majority that if they did not put themselves at the head of the movement they would be carried away by it. Their efforts were vain; they were no more believed than when they had predicted the disasters of Mexico, or the defeats of 1870. No account was taken of their declarations, nor of their offer of concurrence. The storm was defied, and it burst forth.

Who will account them criminal for having stood firm? Who will dare to accuse them of exciting the tempest which they had done all in their power to avoid and prevent?

In accepting the heavy task imposed on their devotion, the Count de Palikao and his colleagues undertook the impossible. The task set before them was not only that of conquering and repelling a victorious enemy, it was to them a necessity to save the dynasty which had brought the enemy into our territory. From a military point of view, the effort was well-nigh hopeless; it was quite so from a political one. Perhaps they might have succeeded, if they had only preoccupied themselves with the former, but in trying to reconcile them, they brought about a double disaster. Begun with insufficient forces, which the nullity of generalship had ended by compromising, this campaign could only be retrieved by brilliant and vigorous action; and this the commander-in-chief was as incapable of conceiving as of executing. His troops lacked neither bravery nor self-sacrifice; but, besides the shattering effect of first defeats, always so fatal to Frenchmen, they had to struggle against a thousand causes of enfeeblement, some old and deep-seated, others arising from the levity, ignorance, and want of foresight which had presided over this expedition. The only plan which appeared reasonable, in presence of an enemy whose courage was well known, consisted in covering Metz, making our army fall back upon a line of operation more favourable to the defence of Paris. We should thus have been able to dispose about 200,000 men, established upon an excellent field for battle, and insure them a safe retreat, which would have the inestimable advantage of furnishing to the capital an army of succour. But, in order to adopt this plan, it was necessary to abandon the Emperor, or to bring him back to Paris,

where the resentment of the populace was to be feared. The Minister Palikao hoped doubtless to be able to save both crown and country; in reality he sacrificed the country to the crown. The Emperor still remained Commander-in-chief; he led Bazaine and his valiant army to the north-east, and, only thinking of his personal safety, lost, in order to gain Verdun, the time which would have allowed our soldiers to escape from Prince Frederic Charles, who was on the point of surrounding them. The evil was already great; the desire to invest the Imperial cause with the prestige of a brilliant victory rendered it irremediable. The Emperor had had an opportunity of judging, during his sojourn at the camp of Châlons, to what extent the anger of the Garde-Mobile and part of the army had reached. He retired precipitately, and, for the sake of his own personal safety, instructed the Minister of War to send him, without delay, 30,000 men, to replace that part of his guard that he had been obliged to leave with Bazaine. The Minister had the weakness to obey; during this time Marshal MacMahon was advancing towards Mezières to join Marshal Bazaine. The route to Paris was open. The fate of France seemed now to depend only upon a battle; and, by a cruel fatality, the march of MacMahon, hindered, retarded by obstacles which ought to have been avoided at any price, allowed the Prince Royal to gain upon him, to unite with the troops of Prince Frederic Charles and General Steinmetz, and to crush us under the walls of Sedan.

This lamentable catastrophe was yet undreamed of, when M. le Comte de Palikao succeeded the Marshal de Bœuf. The Chamber applauded the Minister, and easily accepted the reassuring news when he said at the sitting of August 11 :—

"France is a country that cannot be discouraged by a slight check, and it is in reality only a slight one that we have experienced. In war one must be prepared sometimes to meet with unsuccess, but when we have to deal with a people like the French, when this people is supported by the patriotism of a Chamber like the present, we ought to count upon success. Here it is not a question of party; we are all united. When such is the case, success is certain. Before long, fortune will again smile on us. I am convinced that, with such a general as directs our army, a general in whom I have the greatest

confidence, we shall meet with such a success as shall efface the partial defeats we have suffered."

But the public did not receive this language with the same favour. Although maintaining at the surface its usual appearance, Paris was a prey to a violent and very natural emotion. The mayoralties were besieged with citizens claiming arms, and the slowness of the Administration gave rise to loud complaints. In the evening animated groups filled the Boulevards, and discussed aloud the events of the day. The crowd rushed to the newspaper offices for news. It began already to suspect espionage, and several foreigners were victims to its blind passion. Permanently assembled in one of the bureaux of the Chamber, the members of the Opposition observed with anxiety these dangerous symptoms, and tried to find in uninterrupted deliberation the help so necessary to surmount the perils of the situation. The misfortunes of the country had effaced the differences which, at the epoch of the plebiscite, had created a division in the Left. The need of unity predominated over all differences, and each one sought loyally to help in the common work. This work, as I have said, was not the overthrow of the Empire. We considered the Empire from henceforth impossible; but there was not one amongst us who did not fear, especially in a juncture like this, to accept its fatal heritage. No one can suspect me in speaking thus. I have never dissimulated my hostility to the system of the 2d of December. I have attacked it without remission, in spite of insults from courtiers, who bowed down before its material strength and false glory. I have done so in the earnest conviction that the Empire would ruin France. No consideration would have determined me to serve it. But confident in the strength of principles, I firmly believed it would fall under the condemnation of the vote. It was to obtain this specific and fruitful result that for twenty years I have consecrated my humble and constant efforts. Was it the illusion of a patriotic desire? I saw the end of the elections of 1869, and I engaged in the struggle with a heart full of hope when the war of 1870 was declared. It dissipated all my dreams. If conqueror, the Emperor would confiscate our liberties: if conquered, he would drag us down with him. I beheld the war break out with

feelings of despair, dreading the saddest catastrophes, and, shall I say, even greater than those which have befallen us, supposing they are at an end. At this supreme moment, the idea of the Empire was but secondary: it only remained as the last sign of that fatality to which our country was condemned at the moment when its destinies depended on a will infatuated with itself, and radically incapable of comprehending and directing them.

At the announcement of our first reverses, I felt that all was over with the Empire, that it could not rise from the blow to which it had exposed our legions. It was therefore no longer with a fallen adversary I preoccupied myself when I hastened to the President Schneider, to beg him to wrest from the Emperor the supreme command, and to induce the Chamber to take the power. I thought only of France, whose army had just succumbed heroically, and whose territory was invaded. It was my aim to arrest the conqueror, defeat him, and, if possible, to treat with him. In this train of thought the Empire had no part. Such were the views in which I endeavoured to make my friends participate, not one of whom objected to them. We had no longer occasion to be provoked against the Empire; we cast it aside as a dead thing that encumbered the action both of life and resistance. But, in clearing the way, we did not think of ourselves; we confined ourselves to a rational line of conduct; we merited no praise for disinterestedness. We all measured the dangers, difficulties, and responsibilities of a succession which, sooner or later, would call down the maledictions of the people upon those who should accept it. In our estimation, the country alone was strong enough to brave the animadversion of the country, and we requested that the Assembly, the result of its suffrage, should be charged with this responsibility.

Such is the simple and sincere explanation of the sentiments which inspired us and dictated our resolutions. Let the vulgar, disposed to vilify and degrade, trace in our conduct the promptings of petty party spirit, let calumniators insult those who had no other aim than that of humbly devoting themselves to the safety of their country. I am neither astonished nor indignant at this. But I have faith in the good sense of the public, and in the definitive justice of opinion, and I have no anxiety as to the judgment of history.

The President, M. Grévy, revealed even then, in directing our deliberations, the rare qualities of his firm and enlightened mind. An enemy to all exaggeration, sometimes a little inclined to stiffness and to scepticism, he warned, moderated, and restrained. I should be ungrateful if I were not to acknowledge the services he so courageously rendered. As to the others, it is better to say nothing, for I should be obliged to name and praise them all according to the diversity of their merits, and to render homage to their patriotism and good faith. We have traversed together a period full of anxiety. We have often been divided in opinion as to our plan of action, never upon the necessity of remaining united in the love of our country, in the application of our principles of right and justice; and I think I can safely say, that when the remembrance of these storms, braved in common, shall present itself to the mind of each one of us, it will not awaken either bitterness or regret, because we are all conscious of having done our duty to the best of our ability. The proposition relative to the law of 1851 was voted as urgent, that by which we requested the nomination of a Commission of fifteen members had been sent to the Commission of the Initiative, who, without giving any reason, decided upon its rejection.

During the sitting of the 13th of August, the Minister of War declared that if the proposition were voted the Cabinet would be obliged to retire. It was after these words that the Chamber, forming itself into a secret committee, opened the discussion. The strict privacy of the debate permitted me to be explicit. I stated the reasons which had made me constantly attack the Empire. I had no difficulty in demonstrating that, born of crime, it had been the evil genius of France. In its foreign policy, floating at the will of every adventure; in the home department, leaning upon corruption and servitude, it had isolated and enervated the nation; now it consummated its ruin. How could one possibly admit that a man ignorant of the art of war could conduct our armies and fight against tried captains? To leave him in command was a weakness equivalent to treason. I conjured the Chamber to deprive him of it, and intrust it to Marshal Bazaine. I insisted likewise with great energy that a Government Commission should be chosen.

The vacancy could not be contested; the Emperor, discredited by his faults, had no longer any authority; the Regent was but a name: the only constituted power was that of the Chamber. In invoking it, I was not doing the work of a party, since I had placed myself in the hands of a majority, who had received without a murmur the proposition of one of its members to drag us before a Council of War. I knew all that could be said against the deputies, the result of official candidatures; but time pressed, it was to the expression, such as it was, of the national sovereignty, that we had to intrust the defence and government of the country. I entreated the Chamber not to hesitate. "Fear," said I, in conclusion, "to lose a day. If to-morrow the calamities which seem to conspire against us continue to overwhelm, it is not from your midst that the power will go forth, and if you wish to retain it, it will crush you."

My words met with no reply. Not one of the deputies of the Empire, recipients of its benefits, considered it *apropos* to defend it. I was only condemned by the vote.

In thus acting, the Corps Législatif committed a grave error. If it had seized the supreme power, as I had entreated, the Emperor would have had no more orders to give; Paris would have been covered, and probably saved. This is the opinion I have constantly heard expressed by military men during the siege. We succumbed from the want of an army of succour. 100,000 men would have prevented the occupation of Chatillon and Versailles, and thus rendered the investment impossible.

But M. Schneider, the President, the 7th of August, with M. de Palikao, believed the safety of the dynasty to be united to that of the country, and when they were obliged to choose between Paris and the Emperor, it was to the latter that the last resources of France were sent.

Thus, to the very last, he refused the nomination of the Commission by the Chamber; and this proposition was one of such pre-eminent importance that its discussion was constantly recurring. M. Kératry presented it again at the sitting of the 22d, under the softened form of adding nine members to the Committee of Defence. The Chamber voted its necessity, and already a great number of deputies were in their bureaux, when the Minister ascended the tribune to inform the Chamber

that the Government was opposed to the resolution. Notwithstanding this declaration, the Commission and the Cabinet itself began to hesitate. Every hour affairs became more serious. At the sitting of the 24th, the reporter of the Commission, M. Thiers, pointed out that in putting aside the proposition, the Commission had requested a Committee of three members; but the Government had refused it, and the fear of bringing about a ministerial crisis had decided them to reject the proposition.

Less confident than the evening before, the Minister devised a middle course.

"Desirous," said he, "that the Chamber should have the same confidence in us that we have in it, we have made a modification in our last refusal; we have agreed, in the Council of Ministers, that three members of the Chamber should be nominated by us to unite with the Committee of Defence of Paris."

"We are ready to accept them."

M. de Kératry eloquently contested this half measure. I joined in his efforts. We were defeated with a minority of 53 voices, against a majority of 201.

M. Glais-Bizoin then supported the amendment that he had presented, which consisted in requesting the nomination of a committee of nine members, who should act in concert with the Committee of Defence.

M. Thiers explained clearly that the refusal of the Cabinet had been the only obstacle to the adoption of propositions, whose necessity no one could deny. "We have," said he, "earnestly begged the Ministers to weigh the matter carefully, and to consider that the rejection of this proposition exposed them to its revival in two or three days."

And as the Minister further insisted upon the duty of confining ourselves to the Constitution, M. Thiers replied: —

"I am making a sacrifice to the country in not carrying on the debate upon this subject; but I most earnestly beg that no one will let such an argument have place in this Assembly. We all know why France is fighting at this moment: she is fighting for her independence: she is fighting for her greatness, for her glory, for the inviolability of her territory. We all know it,—the Left, the Centre, and the Right; this truth is

clear as day, and all our hearts beat in unison when you speak of these great, these sublime interests of the nation."

"But speak not to us of institutions: you will not cool our ardour, nor diminish our zeal for the defence of our country; but if you do not discourage us, you cut us to the heart by reminding us of those institutions, which, in my conviction, are the principal cause, more than the men themselves, of the calamities of France."

These sincere and noble words clearly expressed the real sentiments of the Opposition. A few minutes before this I had opposed the equivocal attitude of the Government, which repeated continually that it did not wish to confound the question of policy with the question of defence; and yet it confounded them so much, that it compromised the capital of France in order to save the Emperor; and Paris was now so anxious on this point, that it was said, on all sides, that, to fight in order to consolidate the despotism of the Empire, was a crime and a mockery, and that, if the Emperor were not put aside, all resistance would be impossible. This cruel antagonism distracted me. I felt how great was the inconsistency in asking the citizens to sacrifice their lives in the cause of servitude. But I obeyed, without hesitation, a higher duty, which called us to die, if need be, to save our land from the enemy. Though determined to resist to the last, even with the Empire, I yet comprehended so well the sovereign strength which would be given to the defence by the definitive fall of this detested régime, that I struggled earnestly to wrest from my colleagues this virile saving act. From the 7th of August to the 4th of September, I varied no more than I had done from 1857 to 1870.

Nothing remained but to recognise a fact henceforth determined; but the Chamber did not think the time had come, and 204 voices against 41 threw out the proposition of M. Glais-Bizoin, as it had done that of M. de Kératry.

Meanwhile the situation grew rapidly more serious. It was not merely by half-parliamentary concessions that the Government betrayed its anxiety. Yielding to the pressure of public opinion, it had appointed General Trochu Governor of Paris; and this choice was received as a guarantee against Imperialist violences, which were hourly dreaded. The publication of his

book upon the army had given him the reputation of having an enlightened, liberal, and generous mind. Throughout this fine work there reigns the spirit of a noble simplicity, rare in treatises of this kind. The man predominates without effacing the soldier, and the criticisms directed against our military system have the double authority of a profound sense of justice and a rare experimental sagacity. What calamities would have been avoided if this independent voice had been listened to ! but at that time it was a crime to speak the truth. The general found out his mistake, and if, in the hour of peril, recourse was had to him, it was because such a step was considered expedient. The elevation of M. Trochu was necessarily the abasement of the Empire.

The population of Paris understood it thus, and manifested its resentment to the Empire ; it observed, with joy, that the name of the Emperor no longer figured in his proclamation ; and Paris, from the first, recognised in the general the man who was to save it from Prussia and from Napoleon. It was not in his power to escape from taking the part which events assigned to him, and I do not think he was mistaken as to the rôle he had to take. In the long conversation which he courteously granted me on Sunday, the 21st of August, he explained himself with perfect frankness. I was accompanied by my colleagues MM. Picard and Jules Ferry, some electors of Paris, amongst whom were M. Tirard and the Dr. Montanie. There was nothing of an intimate nature in the conversation, and the general spoke nearly the whole time. We were far from complaining of this, for, with his elegant and varied diction, he touched upon all the points which preoccupied us, giving us their solution. He expatiated at length upon the inferiority of our army, owing, primarily, to its vicious organization. He considered the French soldiers superior to the German ; but the defective nature of their instruction, the laxity of discipline, the absence of respect and confidence shown by the men towards their leaders, were, in his opinion, the causes of a perilous weakness. These observations applied not only to the army, they characterized the country under the Empire. " It is," said he, " only a false show, behind which is nothingness ; and nothing can sufficiently condemn the culpable resolution of

those statesmen and warriors who have dragged France into the hazardous struggle in which she is now engaged. As for Paris, its defence can be no more than an heroic madness. I know it, but I devote myself to its cause. This will be the last act of my life. I am not a politician; I am a soldier. I will do my duty unhesitatingly, and without regret; and I shall end my days in some humble retreat, which I shall well deserve after such an enterprise." . . .

This imperfect summary gives but a feeble idea of the speech which riveted our attention during nearly two hours. Sometimes simple and incisive, and in turn vehement, and abounding in imagery, the general seemed to find in this eloquent effusion a solace to his troubled spirit. He showed us in parting an affectionate cordiality.

We retired in a state of consternation. The changeless serenity with which these sad communications had been made seemed to add a fatality which troubled us like a foreboding of evil. Many times during the course of events that followed, my friend M. Picard and myself have felt the same impression on hearing similar declarations in different forms. On that day, after the first shock, we attributed M. Trochu's hopeless view of the case to the estimate naturally formed by a mind justly alarmed by the vastness of a task without parallel, and we endeavoured only to remember this conference by the eminent and noble qualities and the chivalrous character therein displayed.

The great and formidable question of the defence of Paris was moreover, at that time, the subject of many different opinions. Everywhere discussed with a natural anxiety, it provoked passionate arguments, which left the most competent judges divided in opinion. All agreed in recognising the immense difficulties of the enterprise and the necessity of taking decisive measures without delay. The first step was to form a garrison by calling together all available soldiers and Gardes Mobiles, and by the organization of the National Guard. The second, no less important, and without which safety became altogether problematical, was the constitution of an army of succour to manœuvre around Paris, and to protect the most threatened positions within its limits. It is well known how the latter course was abandoned in order to

cover the Emperor, and to furnish him an opportunity of gaining a great victory.

On the 21st of August I went to the Minister of War with my colleagues M. Picard and M. Kératry. We were delegated by the Opposition to request a more active armament. After having furnished us with explanations upon the subject, the Minister conducted us to a part of the room where hung a map of France. Pointing to Châlons, he said, tracing the route to Mézières, "MacMahon is on the march, in four days he will have joined Bazaine, and their united forces will crush all resistance." We made no reply, but on descending the staircase I expressed to my colleagues my surprise at the seeming facility with which M. Palikao supposed we could trust so strange an assurance. I thought he had intentionally deceived us, but I forgave him readily, thinking that in two days the lines of the Marne and Seine would be strongly occupied by the 150,000 men he had provided. Alas! it was no *ruse*, and unhappily what the Minister had said was only too true. Two days after, through a member of Marshal Bazaine's family, I received most disquieting communications: the Marshal was completely surrounded, and Marshal MacMahon, instead of endeavouring to reach him by the most direct route, that of Verdun, was returning to Mézières. There were no precise news of his movements, but it was known that the Prince Royal had suddenly abandoned his station on Haute Marne, and was hastening towards the Ardennes, where, most probably, he would be in advance of our troops. I hastened to the Minister. He was engaged in Council. I eagerly accosted one of his officers, saying that the route to Paris was open, and that as MacMahon was thrown back towards the north, separated from Bazaine, there was nothing to prevent the Prussians from walking deliberately into the city. "They would not dare to do it," replied he with an admirable *sang-froid*. Certainly my interlocutor no more suspected the disaster about to take place than I did myself; but even if the authorities were in ignorance of facts, they had none the less inexcusably paralysed the forces which might have saved us, and delivered up the capital to the perilous chance of a siege.

The Parisians would not believe this, and General Trochu's

proclamation met with incredulity and mockery. Nevertheless the Committee of Defence displayed a laudable activity; it commenced with patriotic ardour the great work which until then had remained unthought of. Thus everything remained to be done. And although it is now the fashion to bring accusations of apathy and incapacity against the men who devoted themselves to this difficult task, it must none the less be acknowledged that they accomplished prodigious results, surmounting obstacles of every kind, sustained only by the principle of duty. They laboured day and night in completing the fortifications; they accumulated immense resources of material and provisions; they armed the forts; they called in 100,000 Gardes Mobiles from the Departments; they prepared for a great effort, notwithstanding the hope that the enemy might yet be arrested by our generals. The assurance made by the Minister of War during the sitting of the 22d was received with eagerness: "I can assure the Chamber that the defence of Paris is proceeding vigorously, and that we shall soon be ready to receive whoever may arrive."

Nevertheless the fatal moment drew nearer, preceded by sinister reports and tragic events, which seemed its dark forerunners. Every day people reported some violent act, and the arrest of the most influential deputies of the Opposition. The country was traversed by agitators who accused the members of the Opposition and rich proprietors of having betrayed the Emperor, and sacrificed the country. These absurd calumnies met with only too many ignorant people disposed to believe them. At Nontron an honourable citizen was burned in his barn by a stupid crowd. In Gard, Girond and L'Ouest, Protestants were denounced by a violent populace as accomplices of the Prussians. The Minister of the Interior condemned these savage acts in a circular; nevertheless they continued. The newspapers signalized them as the worst excesses of the Bonapartist faction, determined to devastate France by a *jacquerie*, so as to bring about a shameful peace. The party of those who declared they would not march against the enemy so long as the Empire lasted, increased daily. All observed the slowness and unwillingness of the Administration in the preparation and armament of the National Guard. In the secret committees which

followed, the Opposition passionately renewed their pleading for the nomination of an executive power chosen from the Chamber. On the 31st of August, M. Keller only requested it for the defence of Alsace, and he failed, from the determined resistance of the Minister of War. Days passed, and there was no news of the army.

The anguish was terrible. Experience alone can give an idea of the torture. We hastened during the day to the hall of conference, hoping for despatches which did not arrive. The public sittings were short and excited; the Ministers attended them no longer. In the evening we besieged the office of the Minister of the Interior. From the 30th of August to the 3d of September no account of its proceedings was published. Anxiety hourly increased; none believed this silence to be sincere, nevertheless no one suspected the extent of the disaster.

On the 2d of September, towards eleven o'clock in the evening, I was returning from my fruitless errand to La Place Beauveau, when a reliable person came to inform me of the arrival of a telegram announcing the defeat of Marshal MacMahon, who had been wounded. Added to this was the intelligence that the army and the Emperor, no longer able to resist, were shut up in Sedan.

The next day, as early as possible, I was at the Ministry. I was not able to see M. Chevreau; his *chef de cabinet* told me he knew nothing; but it was easy to judge by the attitude of the persons present that all was lost. The confusion was complete; there was nothing more to hope from those who had no longer faith in themselves.

At a meeting of the Opposition, which was permanently established, we agreed to turn our attention to a proposition which should invest General Trochu with the supreme command. We thought that the first thing to be done was to take the power from the Emperor, who still held it. This measure conducted straight to the fall of the Empire, the key-note of the crisis, and to obtain this we had prepared a formal proposition. Its presentation and adoption appeared inevitable; we only awaited a favourable opportunity. While we were deliberating, we learnt from an authentic source the capitulation of Sedan, and the captivity of the Emperor.

It was the last act of this lugubrious drama, and we thought that the Chamber would no longer hesitate to form the committee which we had repeatedly requested in vain. The sitting commenced at three o'clock. In the midst of a dead silence the Minister of War began to speak in the following terms:—

"I have had the honour of promising that, under all circumstances, I would tell you the truth, however painful it might be.

"Grave events have lately occurred. I ought to state that news has arrived, which, although not official, is, in my opinion, likely to be correct.

"This news I am about to give you. The first and most important intelligence is derived from some documents, which state that Marshal Bazaine, after a vigorous sortie, engaged in a battle, which lasted eight or nine hours; and that after this engagement, in which even the King of Prussia avows that the French showed a noble courage, Marshal Bazaine was forced to retreat to Metz, thus preventing that junction which had given us hope for the future success of the campaign.

"This, then, is the first important news I have to give you, and assuredly it is not good.

"Nevertheless, although Marshal Bazaine has been obliged to retire to Metz, it is not said that he may not attempt a fresh sortie; but the attempt to unite with Marshal MacMahon has failed.

"From another source we have received information upon the combat, or rather the battle, which has just taken place between Mézières and Sedan.

"This battle has been for us an occasion both of a success and a reverse. We at first defeated part of the Prussian army, causing its retreat towards the Meuse (this you will have learned by other despatches), but afterwards, overwhelmed by numbers, we had to retreat in part to Mézières, in part to Sedan, and the rest, I am compelled to state, towards the Belgian territory, but the latter number was small."

In the face of these grave results, the Minister announced that the Government appealed to the vigorous strength of the nation; 200,000 Gardes Mobiles were about to enter Paris, which, united to the forces already there, would secure the defence and safety of the capital. He concludes thus:—

"We shall bring the utmost energy to bear upon the organization of these forces, and we shall not relax our efforts until we have expelled every Prussian from France."

The majority welcomed the last words with applause; but they did not satisfy us, and these vague promises were unequal to the needs of the situation.

I endeavoured to make the Chamber understand this in a few brief words. I expressed myself in the following terms:—"The time for complaisance is past; we must all coolly but clearly regard the truth which forces itself upon us. Now, the facts of the case are these: The French army has been heroic in facing the enemy. You have just heard of the prodigies of valour accomplished by Marshal Bazaine, in attempting to penetrate troops whose numbers were the quadruple of his own. He did not calculate the number; he saw that France needed his sword, and he endeavoured to fight his way through every obstacle.

"Before him, a general no less brave offered to aid in this enterprise for the deliverance of the country. He failed! Assuredly it is not valour that is wanting, but it is freedom of command."

The Minister of War.—"No!"

M. Jules Favre.—"No one doubts that troops were demanded from Bazaine for the protection of the Emperor.

"He refused them, and then the Council of Ministers thought it right to take these troops from those destined to defend Paris.

"That is what has been done; such a state of things ought not to continue.

"We ought to know how we stand with the Government which rules us.

"Where is the Emperor? Is he in communication with his Ministers? Does he give them his orders?"

The Minister of War.—"No."

M. Jules Favre.—"Since the reply is in the negative, there is no need for me to prove by a long argument that the Government has ceased to exist, and that (except in the case of an incredible blindness and obstinacy which would be no longer patriotic) it is of yourselves, it is of the country, you must now ask the resources which can alone protect it and you."

Without insisting further upon this point (for the Minister's reply sufficed, and rendered the debate unnecessary, as the Government had ceased to exist) the President Schneider remarked :—

"I must on every occasion protest against similar expressions."

M. Jules Favre.—"Protest as you will, Monsieur le Président; protest against defeat, protest against a fortune which opposes us! Contradict events; say that we are victorious!"

M. Schneider.—"I protest, at all events, against whatever might weaken us."

M. Favre.—"Weaken us! It is precisely strength that I seek; above all, moral strength, and I ask, where is it to be found? It is, sirs, in the country; in the country, endowed with power; in the country, which henceforth must depend only on itself—upon those who represent it, and no longer on those who have ruined it.

"In this crisis, I have only two words to say: That France and the city of Paris, openly threatened, bound by a firm bond, decided not to lay down arms until the enemy is expelled from our territory, must act for themselves; for it is on them, and on them alone, possessed of full liberty of action, that the salvation of the country depends.

"The great requirement of the moment, one which is both wise and indispensable, is that all parties should be merged in a single name representing France and Paris—a military name, that of a man who undertakes the defence of the country; for it is the country so much loved that ought to absorb every other interest. Everything ought to give way before it, and above all, that phantom of government which has conducted France into her present position."

These warnings received no more attention than former ones. Nothing short of a thunder-clap could disperse the obstinate crowd which surrounded that *simulacrum* of power, which an outburst of national wrath would clear away the next day. The Minister of War repeated his refusal. The Chamber was contented to vote the urgency of a proposition of M. Argence, calling to arms all men of from twenty to thirty-five years, married or single. The members separated, a prey to profound anxiety, adjourning till the next day, Sunday, at five o'clock.

But the tide arose so rapidly that this limit could not be maintained. The news of the capitulation of Sedan and the surrender of the Emperor had spread through the city, causing universal indignation. In the evening, immense crowds thronged the Boulevards; the police authorities strove in vain to disperse them by means hitherto successful. They only excited the popular rage. Cries were heard from the crowd, demanding the fall of the Government. Some were armed. There was no more time for illusions; the insurrection had begun; the Government had virtually fallen; not a moment was to be lost in constituting a new one.

It was upon the latter question that we visited M. Schneider at nine o'clock. We begged him to lose no time in convoking the Assembly; and I did not hide from him that I wanted, in the name of my friends and myself, to propose the question of the deposition of the Emperor. In his endeavour to retain the Regent and Prince Imperial, and thinking to avoid a revolt by gaining time, he brought forward objections—moderate, sad, but courteous, and disputed the hopelessness of the situation.

We at length persuaded him to convene the Assembly, which it was easy to do, as almost all our colleagues were in the Salle des Conférences, or in the antechambers of the Palace. We saw him again at half-past eleven; the conversation was long, and resulted in nothing decisive.

In the interval we had arranged our plan. It was still to execute the same idea, the assumption of supreme power by the Chamber. To this we added the deposition of Napoleon III., who had signed it already by surrendering at Sedan.

We were then, at this critical moment, as free from personal interest as we had been when, on the 7th of August, I sought an audience with M. Schneider, the President. We had no other design than to consummate, without a revolution, an act of justice which had now become inevitable. On this occasion, if the Chamber had voted as we requested, the insurrection of the morrow would have had no cause to take place, and we should have been excluded from the new Government chosen by the majority.

I am enabled to affirm, without hesitation, that not one of

us aspired to take part in it. M. Thiers, M. Picard, and myself, discussed the names. We considered that M. Palikao ought to be retained, on account of his acquaintance with the military operations already commenced. We placed by his side M. Schneider, President of the Corps Législatif. M. Picard and myself endeavoured to persuade M. Thiers to form the third member of the Commission. He opposed this, and was proposing other colleagues, when we were informed that the President had taken his seat. It was one o'clock in the morning; the 4th of September had dawned.

In spite of the gravity of the news received, in spite of the agitation of the population of Paris, the Cabinet had not thought proper to meet. The Minister of War was found in bed, and, after stating that Sedan had capitulated, and the Emperor was taken prisoner, requested that the deliberations should be postponed until noon, that he might have an opportunity of consulting his colleagues. It would have been in vain for us to have opposed this delay, which the Chamber hastened to accord; but we thought it our duty to give notice of the proposition for the *déchéance*. Paris required to know, on awakening, that its representatives had not lost courage. I quote from the *Officiel* the few words I pronounced in the name of the Opposition :—

" If the Chamber is of opinion that, in the grave and painful position described by the Minister of War, it is wise to postpone the deliberation till noon, I have no motive for opposing it; but, as we have to urge its deliberation upon the part to be taken, in the absence of all authority, we request permission to place on his table a proposition which I shall do myself the honour to read, without at present adding any further remarks :—

" We beg the Chamber to consider the following motion :

" 1st Article.—' Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, and his dynasty, are declared to have forfeited the power given them by the Constitution.'

" 2d Article.—' A Government Commission shall be named by the Corps Législatif, composed of—(you will fix the number of members you think fit to choose from your majority)—which will be invested with full authority of Government,

and whose express mission shall be, to resist the invasion to the last, and to expel the enemy from our territory.'

"Article 3d.—'General Trochu shall retain his office of Governor of the City of Paris.'

"Signed—'Jules Favre, Crémieux, Barthélemy St. Hilaire, Desseaux, Garnier Pagès, Larrieu, Gagneur, Steenakers, Magnin, Dorian, Ordinaire, Emmanuel Arago, Jules Simon, Eugène Pelletan, Wilson, Ernest Picard, Gambetta, the Count de Kératry, Guyot-Montpeyroux, Tachard, Lecesne, Rampon, Giraud, Marion, Léopold Javal, Jules Ferry, Paul Bethmont.'

"I will add nothing to this proposition which I offer to your wise deliberations, and to-morrow, or rather to-day at noon, we shall have the honour of giving the urgent reasons which appear to oblige every true patriot to adopt it."

The Chamber then separated, without offering any opposition, for the following words of M. Pinard cannot be called such, and, for my part, I did not hear them :—

"We can take provisional measures; we cannot pronounce *déchéance*."

M. Thiers offered me a seat in his carriage. At the Place de la Concorde a dense crowd stopped us. The excitement was immense. We were asked if the *déchéance* had been voted. We replied, that it would be at noon. We begged the populace to remain calm; wisdom and moderation were more than ever necessary; these qualities would enable us to remain firm, and so fulfil our duty to the end. The crowd applauded M. Thiers, and we were enabled to seek the repose which was so necessary to us.

CHAPTER II.

THE FOURTH OF SEPTEMBER.

THE 4th of September, which dawned warm and bright, like a fête-day, drew the population of Paris from their dwellings to enjoy the brilliant sunshine. All was calm during the former part of the day, and the appearance of the city was the same as usual. The approaches to the Corps Législatif, as well as the court-yard of the Hotel de Ville, were silently filled with troops. In the Palace of Industry there were 600 mounted gendarmes ready for an emergency. No announcement was made of the resolution which the Cabinet had been obliged to take, and to this hour I do not know by what means it came to consider our proposition (constantly repulsed since the 9th of August) for the nomination of a Commission invested with authority from the Government; the only addition it made was the dictatorship of M. de Palikao, under the form of a general lieutenancy. This tardy and ridiculous idea could not be received; it had no longer in its favour even the majority, which had at length opened its eyes, and recognised, when too late, the duty it had refused to perform. The possession of the supreme power seemed to it a necessity from which escape was impossible. Nevertheless it hesitated, through an honourable scruple, which several of its members had explained to us at different times before we laid down our proposition. It did not consider itself freed from its oath, and repudiated the idea of voting the *déchéance*. It feared to imitate the Senate of the first Empire, and to be rejected in a similar manner. It therefore sought a formula which should allow the thing to be done without pronouncing the word. The deputies tried different forms, after which they entered into negotiations with us.

They begged us to abandon that in our proposition which wounded their consciences. We wished for nothing more than to smooth all difficulties, provided only that the necessary steps were promptly taken. It appeared to us to be of the first importance to decide upon the course which it was necessary to pursue, and to make known our intentions to the populace. Knowing well the feelings and really legitimate passions which we might expect to rouse, we were ready to renounce the *déchéance*, if it could be made known that it was virtually accepted. Thus, after a lively discussion, we agreed upon this form, which seemed to conciliate all parties,—"Considering the vacancy." It was the most attenuated expression of the idea which it was indispensable to make known. The paper was covered with signatures. We entered the Chamber, where probably we should have accepted it unanimously, when several members of the majority, regretting their consent, withdrew, with their colleagues, to the Salon de la Paix, where they had just been consulting. They then substituted for the words "Considering the vacancy," these: "Considering the circumstances,"—which had no meaning. We could not admit them: it was agreed that each should take his own proposition, and the President Schneider took the chair. It was a quarter past one.

After M. de Kératry had proposed that the Assembly should be surrounded only by the National Guard, the Minister of War expressed himself in these terms:—

"I appear before you in the midst of the painful circumstances of which I informed you yesterday, circumstances which the future may still further aggravate, although we hope the contrary. I am here to tell you that the Government has thought it right to make some modifications in the present condition of the Government, and I am charged to submit to you the following proposition:—

"Article 1st.—'A Council of the Government and of National Defence is constituted. This Council is composed of five members. Each member of this Council is named by an absolute majority of the Corps Législatif.'

"Article 2d.—'The Ministers are named under the countersign of the members of this Council.'"

M. Jules Favre.—"Named by whom?"

M. the Minister of War.—"By the members of the Council.

"3d Article.—'General Count de Palikao is named Lieutenant-General of this Council.'

"Signed in the Palace of the Tuileries."

The *Journal Officiel* says no more, and does not give the signature at the foot of this proposition, for which urgency is demanded.

I claimed a vote for the proposition of the Left, which, in my opinion, ought to have the priority, as having been presented the first, and being more comprehensive than that of the Government.

This motion met with no opposition; M. Thiers supported it in these terms:—

"Sirs, I request that the proposition which I am about to do myself the honour of reading to you be treated as that of M. Jules Favre and that of the Government.

"My personal preference was for the proposition presented by my honourable colleagues of the Left, because, in my opinion, it placed the question clearly before you at a moment when the country requires great decisiveness of action.

"But as, in the grave perils which now surround us, I place the great interest of union above my personal opinions (for that alone can give us such an attitude as is worthy of us before the approaching enemy, and thus ameliorate our position), I have waived my preferences, and although I am not in the habit of making propositions, I have to-day drawn up one, whose revisal I have submitted to several members of the divers parties in the Chamber. The list of names will show you this. The proposition that I have prepared, and which is sustained, as far as I can judge at a first glance, by forty-six or forty-seven deputies, of different parties in the Chamber, is as follows:—

"Considering the circumstances, the Chamber names a Commission of Government and of National Defence.

"A constitutional assembly will be convoked as soon as circumstances permit.

"Signed—Thiers, De Guiraud, Lefèvre-Pontalis, Marquis d'Andelarre, Givelot, Josseau, Baron de Benoist, Martel-Mangini, Bournat, Baboin, Duc de Marmier, Johnston, Lejoindre, Monier de la Sizeranne, Chadenet, Goeerg, Quesné, Houssart,

Count de Durfort de Civrac, De la Monneraye, Matthieu (Corrèze), Chagot, Baron Alquier, Baron d'Yvoire, Terme, Boduin, Dessaignes, Paulmier, Baron Lespérut, Carré de Kérizouët, Monjarret de Kerjégu, Rolle, Roy de Loulay, Vieillard-Migeon, Germain, Leclerc d'Osmonville, Pinart (Pas-de-Calais), Perrier, Guillaumin, Calmète, Planat, Buisson, Baron Eschasseriaux, Durand, Baron de Barante, Descours."

The Minister of War.—"I have but one word to say. It is, that the Government concedes entirely that the country shall be consulted when we get clear of present embarrassments for which we ought to unite all our efforts."

Here I will stay to ask every impartial reader this simple question: In face of these documents, which are the history of yesterday, and which the passion of to-day persists in disfiguring with so much audacity, what just judge will dare to accuse those who are called the men of the 4th of September with having overthrown the Empire, dissolved the Corps Législatif, and retarded the convocation of a constituent assembly? If these be the crimes which condemn the men of the 4th of September to the wrath of the nation, they are the acts of the forty-seven men who signed the proposition of M. Thiers, nay, of the Cabinet itself; for all recognised and proclaimed that the Empire existed no longer, that the Corps Législatif was no more, and that the enemy must be expelled before assembling the electors.

They recognised that the Empire was at an end, since all proposed to constitute a Government named by the Chamber, choosing its Ministers, and directing the defence.

They recognised that the Corps Législatif no longer existed, since they proclaimed the necessity for the convocation of a constituent assembly, that is to say, they decreed the end of the authority of the present Assembly, which the constituent was intended to replace.

They recognised that this constituent assembly could not be convoked at once. The forty-seven said so, "*when circumstances shall permit.*" And the Minister of War said, "when we get clear from present embarrassments, for which we ought to unite all our efforts."

Thus appears this triple truth, which party spirit will try in

vain to hide, which not one of all who formed that memorable sitting had the least desire to oppose.

The Empire had ceased to exist; it had fallen under the blows of unparalleled defeats, such as would have been impossible but for its criminal incapacity. It had fallen under the reprobation of public opinion, and not one among its adulators attempted its resuscitation.

With it had fallen the Corps Législatif, which was its work, the right hand of its policy, its accomplice in the fatal war it had voted without examination, and in ignorance of facts. To admit that it could survive the fall of the power which its own docility had dragged to its ruin was a chimera, which no serious mind could entertain. Thus all rejected it, even the Government, who abdicated in favour of a Commission of Defence.

All desired a new power, freely called by the country, which should raise a constitution above the ruins of that which had just crumbled to dust.

But all agreed likewise, that, in spite of their importance, these duties ought to give place to duties and principles which were still more important. These were to defeat the foreigner who had invaded our land, and to devote ourselves to the last to the defence of our threatened liberty.

This was the solemn, unchangeable judgment pronounced by the Chamber when rising to vote upon the three propositions, before sending them to the bureaux to be submitted to a separate Commission, charged with forming them into a single resolution.

In the ninth bureau, in which I was, the discussion at once turned upon M. Thiers's proposition, and that of the Left. No one supported that brought forward by the Government. The marked disfavour with which the article relative to the lieutenancy-general of M. de Palikao had been received in the public assembly, appeared a silent but all-sufficient condemnation. Those among my honourable colleagues who opposed the *déchéance* repeated the laudable sentiments which I have already mentioned, though they appeared to me to arise from a mistaken view of their duties. This I endeavoured to show, and the discussion, though lively, was being conducted with

order, when a loud noise was heard in the court-yard outside the room in which we were deliberating. My friend M. de Pelletan having left the room to ascertain the cause, returned in a state of agitation, blaming the officers who had given the order for preparing arms and directing them against the crowd which surrounded the palace. Soon after, we beheld the soldiers placed against the windows form in line to protect the entrances. Distant clamours reached us. A deputy entered hastily to inform us that the Chamber was invaded by the populace.

I refused at first to believe it, as I had observed no premonitory sign of such an event. We all quitted the room precipitately. The antechambers were all filled with the mob, who appeared more embarrassed than enraged; nevertheless some individuals, accosting me, demanded the fall of the Government. "We are aiming at that," I replied, "but you will not help us by violently interrupting our deliberations." I begged them earnestly to depart, leaving us to vote freely. I promised them that their desires should be accomplished. It was difficult to carry on a conversation in the midst of the tumult.

I hastened to the sitting.

The *Journal Officiel* states that "at half-past two the Chamber was invaded by the crowd stationed on the Place de la Concorde and in front of the Palais Bourbon; that rushing through the anterooms and stairways, it was precipitated into the public galleries, raising the cry 'La déchéance!' joined with cries of 'Vive la France!' 'Vive la République!'"

Here I must transcribe the account as it stands:—

"Twelve or fifteen deputies only were in the hall.

"M. the Count de Palikao, Minister of War, was on the Government Bench.

"The President Schneider advanced to the chair, and remained some time standing, waiting for calm and silence in the galleries.

"M. Crémieux, addressing the people, said:—

"'My dear friends, I hope you all know me, or that at least there are some among you able to say that it is your fellow-citizen Crémieux who stands before you.

"'Well, as for ourselves, we are the deputies of the Left, we are the members of the Left, engaged in the face of the majority.'

"*M. de Gramont.*—'The majority is blind!'

"*M. Crémieux.*—'We come before the Chamber to secure that the liberty of its deliberations shall be respected.' (Interruptions.)

"*Voices in the galleries.*—'Vive la République!'

"M. Gambetta appeared by the side of M. Crémieux, whose voice was powerless in subduing the noise from the galleries.

"*M. Gambetta.*—'Citizens! (Silence, silence!) In the course of the allocution I addressed to you just now during the suspension of the sitting, we were agreed that one of first conditions of a people's emancipation is order and regularity. Will you keep to this contract? (Yes, yes!) Do you desire us to arrange matters regularly? (Yes, yes!)

"'Since that is your desire, since that is what France joins us in desiring earnestly, there is one solemn engagement which you must make with us, with the determination not to violate it; it is to let the deliberation about to take place have a free course.'

"*From the galleries.*—'Yes, yes!'

"Fresh groups enter the 1st gallery, and particularly the Senators' gallery.

"A tricoloured flag bearing the inscription, '73d Battalion, 6th Company, 12th Division,' is displayed by one of the new comers.

"*M. Gambetta.*—'Citizens, a little calm under present circumstances.' . . .

"*Several voices.*—'The Republic! the Republic!'

"'Under present circumstances each one of you must contribute his part to the general order; in each gallery, each citizen must have care over his neighbour.

"'It is in your power to furnish a grand spectacle and a grand lesson. Will you do it? Will you have it affirmed that you are at once the most penetrating and the freest of peoples? (Yes! yes! Vive la République!)

"'Well, if that be your desire, I adjure you to take this advice:

"'Let there be in every gallery a group which shall insure order during our deliberations. (Bravos and applause from nearly every part of the galleries.)

"'The work of the Commission charged with the examination of the proposition for the *déchéance* and that of the provisionary Government is being prepared, and the Chamber is about to deliberate upon it in a few minutes.'

"*A citizen in the gallery.*—'The President is at his post; it is strange that the deputies are not in theirs.' (Let us hear! let us hear!)

"*President Schneider.*—'Gentlemen, M. Gambetta, who cannot be suspected by one of you, and whom I regard, for my part, as one of the most patriotic men of our age, has just exhorted you in the name of the most sacred interests of the country; allow me to reiterate in less eloquent terms the same adjurations.

"'Take my word for it, the Chamber is called upon at this moment to deliberate upon a question of the greatest importance; and this can only be done in a frame of mind conformable to the requirements of the situation. If it had been otherwise, M. Gambetta would not have requested you to give it your support.'

"*M. Gambetta.*—'And I count upon it.'

"*President Schneider.*—'If I have not the same notoriety for liberalism as M. Gambetta, I think I can nevertheless assure you that I have given sufficient proofs of liberality to allow me to repeat from my chair the same advice as that of M. Gambetta.

"'I am fulfilling the duty of a citizen in conjuring you to respect order in the interest of that liberty which ought to preside at your discussions.'"

The President's voice was suffocated by the tumult, as had been M. Gambetta's. But in reading this account, must it not be confessed that the deputy speaking in the name of the Opposition used towards the crowd the same language as the legal chief of the Chamber; that both being moved by the same sentiment, viz., the sincere desire to arrive at a Parliamentary solution, exhausted themselves in vain efforts to obtain the evacuation of the hall and freedom of deliberation?

Another deputy of the Left, M. Girault, came to their assistance, and his words express the same ideas.

They are as follows:—

"You do not recognise me. My name is Girault, from the Department of Cher; no one has any reason to suspect me. I request that there may be no tyranny. The country has its will; it has been shown. Its representatives have just agreed, and they are of the same opinion. Permit them to deliberate; you will see the country will be contented.

"You will see the nation united. Do you desire this? I am about to call the Committee; they will come, and the entire country will be of one mind.

"There must be no more political parties before the enemy; there must be now a united policy, a united France, to expel the invader, and to retain its sovereignty."

The tribune was vacant for some minutes, when M. Gambetta reappeared.

"Citizens," said he, "it is necessary that all the deputies present in the anterooms and leaving their bureaux (where they have been deliberating upon the question of the *déchéance*) should be at their post to pronounce it.

"It is also necessary that you, citizens, should await the arrival of the representatives with dignity and tranquillity. We have sent for them; I beg you to keep a solemn silence until they return; it will not be long. . . .

"There is no need to say that we shall not leave this place until we have obtained an affirmative result."

The applause following this address was soon followed by a terrible noise. The doors of the hall gave way to the pressure of the crowd, which had penetrated tumultuously into the interior. M. de Piré wanted to ascend the tribune; many of his colleagues attempted to restrain him. He yields to them, but cries, "I had a duty to fulfil; I wanted to protest against the present proceedings."

At this moment the Minister of War, who had several times gone in and out, leaves the hall.

The published account thus describes the end of the sitting:—

"*President Schneider.*—'Deliberation under such circumstances is impossible. I declare the sitting at an end.'

"A large number of National Guards, in uniform or without it, enter the halls by the anterooms, with arms in their hands, and also by the gates of the amphitheatre. A tumultuous crowd rushes in at the same moment, occupies all the benches, fills all the aisles and descends into the semicircle, surrounding the secretaries' table as well as the reporters' desks, exclaiming 'La déchéance! La déchéance! Vive la République!' President Schneider leaves the chair, walks slowly down the staircase on the left of the bureau, and quits the hall. It was was then some minutes after three o'clock."

I was not present at the scenes just described. Some minutes after, I entered the hall and hastened to the tribune, to beg of the crowd to retire. The tumult was at its height, and I was powerless to quell it, when, turning towards that side by which, unknown to me, M. Schneider had left, I saw the dishevelled heads of two men, who were evidently in the highest state of excitement. One of them was ringing the bell loudly, and was preparing to propose some decree. The recollection of the 15th of May flashed upon my mind. I recalled Barbès making the mob vote foolish measures. I did not hesitate; and, feeling the full import of the step I was about to take, I succeeded in making a few words audible in the midst of this tempest. As it was demanded on all sides that I should proclaim the Republic, I said, "It is not here that this can be done, but at the Hotel de Ville. Follow me, I will go thither at your head." This course, which had suddenly suggested itself to my mind, had the advantage of freeing the Chamber, of preventing a sanguinary conflict within its precincts, and of preventing an attack which would have rendered a violent faction master of the movement. It is true we thus exposed ourselves to the peril of a march through the city, in which the chances were very uncertain. I was utterly ignorant of the attitude of things outside; but there was no time to hesitate. My proposal was received with acclamation, and I left the tribune in the midst of the cries of "To the Hotel de Ville!" At the door which leads into the gallery of Pas-perdus, I was surrounded by a number of my colleagues, among whom were M. Emile de Kératry and M. Jules Ferry. They came to my side, and we set off.

When we reached the Quay, I soon perceived that the crowd which marched behind me had nothing to fear. The steps in front of the Palais Bourbon were covered with citizens and National Guards, who hailed us enthusiastically. A similar sight was seen in the distance, on the steps of the Church of the Madeleine. The Pont de la Concorde and La Place resounded with shouts of sympathy. We proceeded slowly, exchanging tokens of sympathy with persons of all ages, who crowded towards us. It was with difficulty that the

National Guards could clear the way before us. At the end of the bridge a formidable cry arose of "To the Tuileries!" We energetically made a signal for the crowd to pass along the Quays, and it obeyed us. We had just passed the Solferino Gate, when, among the crowd of people, I singled out General Trochu, followed by his lieutenant-major, and coming towards us. Our line halted instantly. I made my way through the crowd, and holding out my hand to the General, explained in a few words the events of the day. "There is no longer any Government," I added; "my friends and I are on the way to constitute one at the Hotel de Ville; we beg you to return to your part of the town, and there to await our communications." The General offered no objection, and started off on a gallop in the direction of the Louvre.

The clock pointed to five minutes to four when we arrived at the Place de la Grêve. There the crowd was dense. A long stream of people had proceeded along the left bank of the river, and prepared to cross the Pont d'Arcole to join us. We were carried, rather than pressed, into the large hall of the Hotel de Ville. It was full to overflowing; nevertheless, they made way for us to the benches placed at the further end. I spoke a few words, which were received with the cry of "Vive la République!" This was in reality the idea in which this excited populace included the fall of the Empire and resistance to the foe. On these two points all were agreed—the Republic was the formula; it represented the country and liberty. This idea entered into all deliberations with an irresistible force.

While I was speaking, my colleagues, MM. Picard, Gambetta, Jules Simon, Pelletan, Emmanuel Arago, had arrived; M. Crémieux soon followed; a large number of deputies accompanied them. It was necessary to deliberate, and to that end we had to escape from the frightful tumult in the large hall. We soon procured an entrance into a small committee-room, lighted by a wide window; it was soon filled by the crowd, but we were enabled to find a table and chairs. We immediately agreed to form a Government, with the Paris deputies and those who had been elected; it was the only means to cut short the discussions between the leaders of different parties. Violent speeches were addressed to M. Gam-

betta, who had energetically opposed the name of M. Felix Pyat; but, for the same reason, it was impossible not to admit that of M. de Rochefort.

We were just installed. A message had been sent to General Trochu, who had had some difficulty in reaching us. He had laid aside his uniform, but nevertheless he came to place himself at our disposal. His language was clear and firm.

"I beg of you," said he, "the permission to place a preliminary question before you: Will you protect the three institutions—Religion, the Family, and Property, in promising me that nothing shall be done in opposition to their interests?"

We assured him of this.

"Upon that condition," said he, "I am with you, provided that you make me President of the Government. It is indispensable for me to occupy this post. As Minister of War, or Governor of Paris, I shall not lead the army; and if we want to defend Paris, the army must be in our hands. I am not a statesman; I am a soldier; I know the sentiments of my comrades; if they do not see me at your head, they will leave you, and your task cannot be fulfilled. It is not ambition which dictates to me this resolution; it is the conviction that without it nothing can be done. Besides, if we are to have any chance of success, it can only be by concentrating all power in the hands of one man. As military commander, my authority must be without limit. I shall not in any way interfere with you in the exercise of civil power; but its action must be in co-operation with that of the defence, which is our supreme duty. Nothing which concerns this double movement can be ignored by me; it is a question of responsibility and of safety."

The frankness of this unexpected declaration did not displease one amongst us. We were not blind to the enormity of the dangerous burden which our country's disasters had imposed on us. It was impossible that we should hesitate in sharing it with an illustrious, courageous, and popular general, even in leaving him the heaviest share of the load, who, in the terrible position to which we were reduced, had evidently the largest stake at issue. We accepted his conditions, and he

departed, with a walking-stick in his hand, to go and take possession of the War Office.

Shortly after, a deputation from the Corps Législatif was announced. M. Grévy was its spokesman. He informed us that, freed by the retreat of the mob, the Assembly had adopted the resolution sent that morning to the bureaux. A Government Commission had been named, without deciding upon the number of its members. "The Corps Législatif," said he, "had considered the events that had just taken place, and its desire would be to conciliate them with its own action. I am its interpreter when I ask you to respond to this desire, and to make known what you think is possible in this state of things."

I replied to my honourable colleague that, "deeply touched by the steps he had taken, I could not leave him in ignorance that, in my opinion, they could have no result. They were like all those measures that people take when the opportunity of action is passed, and some event brings to light a fact which has been persistently denied. I reminded him with what earnestness we had, during the last month, been supplicating the Chamber to take the supreme power in order to avoid a revolution. The Assembly came round to our opinion when the revolution took place, and it was now done in opposition to it as well as the Empire. I feared it was too late; and, after all, several of my colleagues were absent, and I was not able to do anything without them. It was agreed that we should send our reply before the meeting of the Corps Législatif, which was to take place at eight o'clock."

Shortly, M. Garnier Pagès and Glais-Bizoin came to give us the information necessary to understand all the facts. M. Glais-Bizoin informed us that he had closed the doors of the hall and sealed them; and when an honourable deputy ridiculed the weakness of such a precaution, he called two national guards, and said to them, "I trust these bands of paper to your keeping. If the Count who is present wants to tear them off, you have the means of sparing him the inconvenience which might result." As to the overtures M. Grévy had acquainted us with, the members of the new Government were unanimously of opinion that it was impossible to accept them. M. Jules Simon and myself were delegated to inform the meeting (which

was to be held at eight o'clock in the refectory of the Presidency) of this opinion.

And how, in fact, could it be otherwise? If anything astonishes me, it is that such a combination had ever appeared reasonable. The Corps Législatif had had an opportunity of acting while it was yet invested with the strength to do so; it had refused, taking refuge behind the oath it had sworn to the Constitution. That very morning, although half-vanquished by the terrible lesson of misfortune, it had rejected the formula which implied the cessation of the power of the Empire. Did they abandon this scruple a few hours after? What had happened? An act of violence, which, far from shaking its resolutions, ought to have confirmed them. This act was either criminal or lawful. If criminal, the Corps Législatif could not possibly unite with it; if lawful, then it must be accepted. To unite with it, when it was too late, at the risk of rousing the passions just appeased, was an inexcusable imprudence; we should have blamed ourselves for attempting it; we should thus have roused against us those who were revolted by the unpopularity of the Corps Législatif. If we had only considered our personal interest, we should gladly have given into other hands than our own that power which we had not sought, and which we had repeatedly offered to those who had thrown it away. Forced to seize it in the storm, we could not, without madness, expose it to the certain attacks which must have been provoked by the adjunction of our colleagues, and by retaining the Corps Législatif. The enemy was at our gates; we had no time to risk a sedition; without losing a moment we were obliged to devote ourselves to the defence of Paris.

Such were the reasons which I briefly stated at the meeting of the deputies, to which M. Jules Simon and myself repaired. It was then eight o'clock; I had taken nothing since the morning; the heat was oppressive, and I was exhausted with fatigue. I was none the less strongly impressed by the strange scene of which we were witnesses. It was, in truth, a singular position, and one which, I believe, is unparalleled. An Assembly which still pretended to be the only representative of the country, and, to protect its Constitution and Sovereign, had summoned before it those of its members who had separated themselves

from it in the midst of a popular tumult; that Assembly requested these members to admit it to a share in the insurrectionary Government which they had just established, hoping thus to gain respect while breaking its oath, since the oath which had been its plea for remaining a body politic it now laid aside to join in the official destruction of the Constitution and the Empire. Public peril could alone explain such anomalies; this sentiment was so keen in the hearts of all that it effaced all political divisions. In offering to unite with us, our honourable colleagues only obeyed, I am sure, a patriotic sentiment; but they had misjudged of the width of the gulf which a few hours had placed between us. On our side we should have been glad to have had their concurrence; but, being convinced that it would be fatal to the defence, we were obliged to refuse it. None of those who composed the meeting could judge otherwise, and this last trial was, on their part, more an effort to ease their conscience than a serious attempt; this might be read on every face when we reached the appointed place of meeting. Paris, which we traversed, was calm and joyous. Any inhabitant who might have left his house during that evening, ignorant of the events of the day, could never have guessed them while walking along the quays bathed in the moonlight, where were strolling many persons without any apparent emotion. The offices of the Ministry had not been taken away, they had been resigned. In everything the new Government had been anticipated, so that it had no cause for anxiety, much less for rigour. M. de Palikao and M. Duvernois might have taken a promenade on the Boulevards, like soldiers glad to be relieved of their watch. The revolution was in every soul, so that it could have no enemy, and, in fact, it had none; for if any had existed, where would they have been more wrathful than among the members of the Corps Législatif? And there they were not. As they arrived successively in the vestibules of the Presidency, we exchanged courtesies with them as if nothing had happened. In the absence of M. Schneider, detained by illness, we had recourse to one of the Vice-Presidents. They both declined this honour, and, by a kind of prophetic choice, it was M. Thiers who was fixed upon to direct the deliberations.

I shall never forget the scene in that large and beautiful dining-hall, luxuriously lighted so as to lend its sumptuous yet sad and familiar character to the funereal discussion marking the last hour of an Assembly which could not survive the Empire. Our honourable colleagues were seated at a long table. M. Thiers stood grave and reserved; he received us with courtesy and dignity, informing us of the resolutions he was intrusted to communicate to us. I replied, frankly expressing how much I was touched with the sentiments which obtained for us this interview; how much I desired a reconciliation, but also how decisive were the reasons which appeared to render it impossible.

In replying, M. Thiers, with his exquisite *finesse*, spoke of me as his *dear former colleague*. He said he could not approve of what had happened; but that he desired none the less earnestly that the courage of those of his colleagues who had not withdrawn before a formidable task might be profitable to the country, and gain for it that success which was the ardent desire of every good citizen.

An honourable deputy attempted a violent speech.

Monsieur Thiers stopped him, with the palpable assent of the Assembly.

Another demanded of me what we had done with the Corps Législatif.

I should have preferred not to reply. I simply said, "The Government is considering the question."

We were retiring, when one of my colleagues detained me, and leading me to the table, requested me to say something for the Departments. I attempted to do so, expressing the natural hope to find them united in a common sentiment of defence. I promised, in the name of the Government, to do all that was possible to strengthen it; was it not both our interest and our duty to do so?

We then separated, receiving from many of our colleagues the most sympathetic encouragements.

I again ask: Is it a scene of sedition that I have just described? Were they factious persons, braving the majesty of laws, who received at the hands of those who laid down the lawful authority such good wishes as would have betokened

on their part infamous cowardice? Was there, on the part of those who suffered these men to meet them, any disregard of their own dignity, or any sign of debasement?

Let the public conscience pronounce its judgment; I am not afraid to interpret its sentence. It will say that all thought they were doing their duty, and that at the time when these things took place, nobody imagined that any other principle than patriotism was the source of the inspiration which impelled every actor in this solemn drama.

During this time what had become of the Senate? It had been forgotten; and I suspect that the reader would have troubled little about it if historical fidelity did not oblige me to say a word respecting it. This is because, in spite of its official rank in the State, in spite of the rank of several of its members, this body politic could have rendered no help to that power which it had never been able to resist. Deprived of all moral authority, it was conscious of the utter futility of any effort it might make. Courage is unavailing when it cannot be applied. That which individually the senators might have displayed, was already rendered impossible by the discredit which had fallen on the entire body. Thus they never thought of taking any part whatever, and confined themselves to protesting against the violence submitted to by the Corps Législatif. It must even be said that the first to speak, the venerable M. Chabrier, showing his indignation against the proposition for the *déchéance* and the creation of a new Government, did not fear to add, "I will not seek in the past where lies the blame, or where it is not. When the Prussians shall have been expelled we will settle accounts. It will belong to the country, met in *comices*, to pronounce it."

Thus, for him, the *déchéance* was only a question of date; he postponed it until after the defeat of the enemy, and we should all have agreed to this, had it been possible.

The President did not take up this opinion; he contented himself with asking the Assembly what resolution it would decide upon in such a grave conjuncture; and the Assembly, as embarrassed as himself, knew not what to decide upon. What signified, in reality, the permanency, if it apprehended

no danger, or resulted in no external act? Besides, it was known that the Senate was safe from all aggression.

"No force threatens us," said the President, "and we are condemned to remain here a long time with nothing to do."

M. Baroche was no less explicit. "If we hoped that the force, popular and revolutionary, which has invaded the Corps Législatif, should turn upon us, I should persist in the thought I have expressed, and I should desire that each should retain his seat awaiting the invaders. But, unhappily (and I say unhappily, because it is here that I would die), we have not that hope. The revolution will break out in Paris; it will not come to seek us here."

The honourable speaker proposed to the Senators to separate, that they might go to the assistance of the Regent.

This advice was not relished, any more than that which succeeded it. Propositions, permanence, a night sitting, and the convocation in private houses, were rejected, as all offering inconveniences. The Assembly even thought it would not be right to change its accustomed time of meeting for the morrow; noon-time appeared rash, and the sitting was adjourned at half-past three, upon the following words of the first Vice-President, M. Boudet:—

"I request the Senate to meet to-morrow at the usual time, at two o'clock, independently of external events, to receive, if the occasion permits, the communications of the Corps Législatif, unless circumstances require M. the President to convoke us before that time."

The Government constituted at the Hotel de Ville was composed of nine deputies from the Seine, of M. Picard and M. Jules Simon, named also for Paris, and of General Trochu, accepted by us in the terms I have already given.

That same evening Government nominated its Ministry, which was composed of the following members:—

M. Ernest Picard, Minister of Finance.
M. Léon Gambetta, Minister of the Interior.
M. Crémieux, Minister of Justice.
M. General Leflô, Minister of War.
Admiral Fourichon, Minister of the Marine.

M. JULES SIMON, Minister of Public Instruction.
M. JULES FAVRE, Minister of Foreign Affairs.
M. DORIAN, Minister of Public Works.
M. MAGNIN, Minister of Agriculture and Commerce.

Five members of the Government, MM. Trochu, Garnier-Pagès, Pelletan, Emanuel Arago, and Rochefort, received no office.

These measures were adopted without debate, except in the case of the Ministry of the Interior, upon which a vote had to be taken. M. Gambetta had a majority of two votes over M. Picard.

At the same time the Government announced its accession by three short Proclamations addressed to the nation:—

"Frenchmen,—The nation has taken precedence of the Chamber which hesitated. In order to save the country in danger, it has demanded a Republic.

"It has placed its representatives not in power, but in peril.

"It was the Republic that saved the country from invasion in 1792. The Republic is proclaimed. The revolution is effected in the name of public safety.

"Citizens, watch over the city which is confided to you; to-morrow you, together with the army, will be the avengers of the country."

The following was addressed to Paris:—

"Citizens of Paris,—The Republic is proclaimed.

"A Government has been appointed by a unanimous vote.

"It is composed of the following citizens (giving the names as above).

"General Trochu is invested with full military power for the National Defence.

"He is appointed President of the Government.

"The Government invites all to be calm. The people will not forget that they are in the face of the enemy.

"The Government is above all a Government of National Defence."

Thirdly, The Government appealed to the National Guard:—

"Those upon whom your patriotism has just imposed the formidable duty of defending the country, thank you from their heart for your courageous devotion.

"It is to your resolution that is due the civic victory which has restored liberty to France.

"Thanks to you, this victory has not cost a drop of blood.

"The personal power exists no longer.

"The entire nation again takes up its liberty and its arms. It has risen up, ready to die for the defence of our territory. You have restored its life, which despotism had suffocated.

"You will maintain with firmness the execution of the laws, and, rivalling our noble army, you will together show the way to victory."

M. Etienne Arago was appointed Mayor of Paris.

M. Emile de Kératry Prefect of Police.

After having decreed those measures which seemed necessary to the maintenance of public tranquillity, we left at the Hotel de Ville M. Jules Ferry and M. Etienne Arago.

Paris had never been more peaceful; and although at that late hour there were still many shops open and passengers in the streets, although at every step were armed men, neither disputes nor violent words were to be heard. No one thought of the possibility of resistance to the great movement which had been just accomplished. And how could it have been suspected? There had been neither conspiracy nor combat. The Empire had not even been overthrown by a sudden blow, or one of surprise. Its fall was only the natural and inevitable consequence of a series of faults, equivalent to crimes, which irrevocably condemned it. It had therefore accomplished its own ruin; and if Paris had not risen against the Empire, it would none the less have disappeared. In several towns the Republic was proclaimed on the morning of the 4th of September. This time France did not undergo the influence of the capital. France preceded Paris, and resolved of itself to provide for its honour and safety. Thus there was nowhere the shadow of a conflict. All those numerous champions of the dynasty, who were so much spoken of, all those docile functionaries, disappeared as by an act of magic, without one of them dreaming of risking himself by an act of fidelity or devotion.

And it was not from lack of courage, still less from calculated defection, it was the instinctive acknowledgment of a superior

force which it would have been madness to oppose; this force was no other than that of the human conscience, awakened at length by misfortune, and manifesting itself in the unanimous reprobation of the man and of the system which had ruined France. It is this which explains the inertia of the Corps Législatif and of the Ministry. They did not for a moment entertain the idea of attempting an energetic measure, so convinced were they that it would have been impossible and futile. They accepted their fate, acknowledging in the depth of their hearts that they merited it. Perhaps some among them were displeased with those of their colleagues who had taken the supreme power, but not one of them regarded the latter as usurpers, for all knew that they had only acted in spite of themselves, and in consequence of the persistent refusal of the majority to take a decided step when the moment for it had arrived.

Thus fall, before the judgment of sincere minds, as before history, those passionate accusations which are continually directed against the deputies who, on the 4th of September, believed it to be their duty to place themselves at the head of public affairs. What would have been the results if they also had succumbed before the popular movement, and placed their personal safety before that of the country?

The Commune of Paris would have established itself at the Hotel de Ville, and this would have been followed by civil war, division in the army, the ruin of the defence, the shame of defeat in the midst of anarchy, with dishonour before all Europe. This was the certain future reserved to us, and no man of good faith can deny it. It is this too which justifies both the men who seized the Government, and those who did not oppose them. If the former had only been factionists, seeking in the reverses of the country the opportunity of satisfying a criminal ambition, the latter, in not opposing them, would have been guilty of a shameful cowardice. But neither of them have incurred reproach. All submitted to the law of necessity. But it would be a shameful injustice to make the responsibility of this weigh upon those who, at that critical juncture, did not hesitate to brave every peril in the attempt to save the country.

For the rest, let any one seriously look back upon the situa-

tion of Paris and France at that moment, and he will see with what difficulties this undertaking was beset. Those armies which the Empire had ostentatiously declared to be upon the point of falling upon Germany, were destroyed or blockaded. More than 100,000 of our soldiers were taken prisoners. The troops of the enemy were marching on Paris without any possibility on our part of sending a regiment to oppose them. Our fortifications were in an unfinished state. Material was lacking. Thus without resource, we were at the mercy of our formidable adversary, who by a bold stroke might reduce us in a few days. Now, Paris had formed no idea of this hopeless state of things; the inhabitants of the surrounding Departments, a prey to natural terror, flowed into it, adding to its inhabitants more than 400,000. How, with a population of more than 2,000,000, should we dare to brave a siege? How was that population to be fed, disciplined, maintained in the midst of the excitement and effervescence which must be the inevitable consequence of this trial, at the same time so new and so terrible? Those politicians who had surrounded that immense capital with bastions and forts, had never imagined that it could sustain a regular siege. They meant it to have been protected by forces outside, so as to give time to assistant armies to enter in line. But here the army of succour was wholly wanting. We could count upon 100,000 Gardes Mobiles, who arrived in haste from their Departments, but they had neither military instruction nor habiliments. They could not furnish any assistance at present. It was the same with the National Guard of Paris, among whom, it is true, a few old guns were distributed, but who were neither organized, nor furnished with clothes, nor commanded. We had, in reality, only crowds ignorant of war, and walls almost without artillery, wherewith to oppose a powerful enemy. Besides, it was easy to foresee that these ardent and confused masses would yield to the pernicious influence of agitators who might seek to excite them. It seemed therefore impossible to attempt any serious resistance, and yet it was really impossible not to attempt it. Under the appearance of a frivolity that nothing had yet been able to correct, Paris had an invincible resolution to defend itself to the last. To the exaggerated idea of its forces it

united the most complete ignorance of those of Prussia. It regarded the complete investment as a chimera, and an assault as nothing but an opportunity to crush the besiegers; besides this, it counted upon the provinces, and believed that at all the important points of the territory armies were ready to march on the enemy. Thus was Paris animated with the utmost confidence, and, through a natural reaction against the cowardice of the Empire, which had just fallen in contempt, it burned to sacrifice itself for the country, and to crush under its walls the bold invader who had brought desolation and death to the very heart of our territory.

If these were the feelings of Paris, the deputies invested with the power on the 4th of September could but join in them. They owed it to their past, as well as to the sentiment of patriotism, which they would have been culpable to enfeeble. I know that since our disasters there have been found weak-minded men who have not feared to regret that after Sedan France did not yield and submit to the conditions of the victor. It would thus have avoided great sacrifices, it is true, and certainly, if nations were only guided by material interests, these regrets would be legitimate. But, thanks to God, they obey nobler inspirations. For them the sentiment of honour is not less imperious than that of their own preservation. In fact, the two feelings are intimately connected. In disdaining the sentiment of honour, they would weaken the moral force in which lies their real strength. Paris and entire France understood it thus. Many believed in success, all in duty; and this duty, at once grand and simple, inspired every mind; it imposed on them the resolution to resist so long as there remained any human possibility of doing so. Besides, the manifest object of the movement of the 4th of September was to banish the base man who had brought the foreigner into our land, and had not been able to expel him, then taking up the sword which France had had the madness to trust him with, to use it till the last in the service of the country; mutilated as it was, it might yet, in the hand of the Republic, strike terrible blows at Prussia. This is what the deputies of the Opposition had sought for so earnestly since the 8th of August. When, dwelling on the dangers which the incapacity of the Emperor had caused us

to incur, they requested a Commission of Government chosen from the majority, they only had in view a determined defence (and in this they had the concurrence of all their colleagues without exception), a defence which should unite the entire nation for the purpose of falling upon the enemy, and driving him from our frontiers. There was therefore no possibility of hesitation. The continuation of the struggle was their only watchword, the only one that Paris would accept.

But for its execution patriotism and courage did not suffice. We had already learned, by a fatal experience, to what a result illusions lead, and those that had so long been entertained on the subject of the German armies were no longer permissible. Large armies, inured to war, wisely organized, commanded by leaders who were educated, vigilant, and brave, dominated by the double passion of love for their King and hatred of France, were advancing against us with the firm design of conquering us, and they had also another advantage in the consciousness of unhoped-for successes. It was necessary to prepare for an extraordinary effort. As I have just said, in a material point of view everything was to be done, and in a moral point of view the confusion was no less terrible. Paris was ready for any sacrifices, but it longed to give expression to the joy caused by the overthrow of the Empire. It did so with the *abandon* of its impressionable and mobile character, and seemed to consider itself saved because it had regained its liberty. Its gaiety contrasted strongly with our preoccupations. We were contemplating from the Hotel de Ville the magical spectacle offered by the crowd, and some one having expressed his admiration, M. Simon said to me in a grave and sad tone, "I am thinking only of the Prussians." He interpreted my own thoughts exactly.

It would have been strange if that thought had not absorbed us; and it was because we were convinced that we should be attacked in the beginning of the following week that we could not convoke an Assembly immediately, as we wished. It was, however, in question at our first meeting in the Hotel de Ville, even before we were constituted as a Government. M. Picard had announced this convocation in the proclamation to the people. The majority thought it better to wait for some days,

and in fact, on the 8th of September, four days after, the decree for the convocation was issued.[1] But its execution could be but uncertain, since it was subject to an understanding with the enemy, or to a victory which should cause them to retreat. All agreed on this point, even the Corps Législatif, even the Minister Palikao, as I have already shown in quoting the explicit declarations made during the sitting of the 4th of September. When, on the evening of that day, we yielded to the desire of our colleagues to put ourselves in communication with them, not one of them desired the convocation of an Assembly. The patriotic and noble language of M. Thiers seemed to exclude the idea of it.[2] "To oppose to-day," said he, "the men of this Government, would be an act the reverse of patriotic. They ought to have the concurrence of all citizens before the enemy; they have our best wishes, and we cannot place obstacles in their way by an intestine struggle. May God help them!" And afterwards he says: "We are here before the enemy, and on that account we are all ready to make sacrifices to our country in her present danger, which is immense. We must keep silent, pray for her, and leave to history the task of judging." Again I appeal to all men of good faith. Not a man, in Paris at least, dreamed of elections, and all would have considered them inopportune and impossible. Already more than twenty Departments were invaded, and a large number of others threatened. The citizens must go to their arms, and not to the vote. The Government that had risen by necessity from the ruins of the Empire, had for its mission to consecrate itself exclusively to the defence of the country, and at a time when the Prussian columns were hourly expected, no other thought was admissible than that of preparation for their reception.

But among all those problems raised by this necessity, one of the first was certainly that of the internal administration, to which this great population must be subjected during a time of unknown trial, having the most uncertain issues. Was it able to bear the rigour of military law, often beneficial in similar crises? Was it not wiser to govern it by the application of a

[1] See the Pièces Justificatives.

[2] See the Pièces Justificatives on the sitting of the night of 4th September.

system of liberty? I can understand that, after our misfortunes, one may regret that the former system was not adopted. But I still remain convinced that it was impracticable, that it could have prevented nothing, and that it might have aggravated the danger to which, during nearly five months, we have been daily exposed.

The hatred of despotism, as much as rage at our defeats, had overthrown the Empire. The Republic had been immediately proclaimed by a popular movement which no human force could prevent. To have inaugurated its establishment by an absolute suppression of thought would have been to break the only lever in the hand of the nation by which it still had the power to move the world. To substitute for that enthusiasm which transports the soul, a passive obedience which crushes it, would have been madness, and the Government which tried it would not have existed twenty-four hours. Now, that which had been formed at the Hotel de Ville hoped to combine in itself the most efficacious elements of resistance and order. To repel the Germans, and prevent sedition, such has been its constant effort during the whole of its existence. In the accomplishment of this double duty, it considered that liberty would be a more powerful auxiliary than submission to absolute command. By this means it created for itself numerous difficulties, but it may have prevented catastrophes. It has, at any rate, offered to the world a spectacle without parallel in history,—that of a besieged town containing within its walls nearly 2,500,000 men, a prey to the hardest privations, to unspeakable sufferings, to feverish agitations, but who yet possessed full liberty to think, write, speak, and assemble. Among this multitude are 400,000 armed citizens, obeying excited leaders, unwilling to recognise any rule but that which they chose. These represent the public force, and might in a few hours of misrule overthrow all order, and sacrifice the city they were appointed to defend. Add to these, numerous volunteers, club and street orators, and journalists, who every morning excited the passions of the people, and often urged to insurrection, spies and conspirators, and one may judge of the formidable difficulties which the conduct of affairs presented in the midst of so many causes of disorder. However, these five

months of martyrdom have passed over us; the painful issue excited the wrath of all; and yet, save the days of October 31 and January 22, in which the rebels were easily vanquished, order has not been disturbed by civil war; and that mutiny so complaisantly predicted, and on which the Prussians had counted for the success of their plans, did not break out until the Government of National Defence no longer existed, until Prussia, although at our doors, was bound by a Treaty, until perturbations (which might have been avoided) had sown among the population of Paris the seeds of death, which some villains developed with infernal skill.

I shall attempt in the course of this recital to show to whom the merit of this extraordinary result is due. In any case, it must ever remain an honour to the besieged Parisians. The sanguinary history of the Commune will not diminish its worth. And besides, it is not inappropriate to say that it was under the most monstrous despotism that the Commune established its fatal reign. It would have been impossible with liberty. It was only under cover of secrecy that its crimes and violence could be perpetrated. It was by oppression and servitude of thought that it prepared its abominable and ephemeral success; and this is a consolation and a lesson for the friends of liberty, for they can invoke this striking and lugubrious example as an additional proof in favour of the system adopted by the members of a Government without control, who, while invested with sovereign power, would only use it to testify their scrupulous respect for all liberty.

CHAPTER III.

THE DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS AFTER THE 4TH OF SEPTEMBER.

I HAVE stated in the foregoing chapter how, on the 4th of September, desirous of escaping from the tumult of the crowd that filled the large hall of the Hotel de Ville, where the Republic had just been proclaimed, we had sought refuge in a room generally occupied, I believe, by the attendants. This room was soon invaded, and it was with difficulty that we could obtain possession of some seats and a table, which were absolutely necessary. We had been there a few minutes, when some one slipped behind me and whispered, "The English ambassador desires to know when he can be received by you; he hopes it will be as soon as possible." I replied that the next day he who should be appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs would hasten to place himself at his disposal. This step was certainly that of a person well disposed, though unauthorized. Nevertheless, the next day Lord Lyons did me the honour to inform me that he would take the first opportunity to come and talk with me; and this he did. I only name this incident to prove the good-will of the representative of Great Britain, whom I have always found animated with the best feelings towards France. It also shows the opinion formed, from the first, of the revolution that had just taken place. No one regarded it as an insurrection which legal authority might endeavour to quell. Although the Corps Législatif sent us a deputation to demand an understanding, the Minister of one of the first powers of Europe, inspired only by interest for his country, put aside all formality, and came forward with a loyal simplicity, to meet those who did not fear, in the midst of this terrible storm, to seize the helm of France.

Without recoiling before the immense responsibility of so perilous a task, we took for our guide those principles which we had always defended. And as we had followed them in the conduct of internal affairs, we could not quit them in our foreign policy. I had often had the opportunity of expressing this in the Chamber, and it was doubtless the reason why my colleagues determined to confide the application of these principles to me. They did not forget the position I had taken at the moment of the declaration of war. They knew that I had energetically opposed it, and that in acting thus I remained faithful to the peace policy which I had always maintained since 1866, as the only means of putting a curb upon the threatening ambition of Prussia.[1] They thought with me, that this policy must be the starting-point and the rule of our conduct,—not to lay down our arms if Prussia had the pretension to dictate humiliating conditions, but to claim and obtain from Europe an intervention, which humanity, reason, and, above all, its own interest and dignity, demanded.

It was this intervention I hoped for; and I have done my utmost to obtain it. Now, after the sad failure of my efforts, I still remain convinced that my hope was a reasonable one, and that in disappointing it Europe committed a fault which she cannot fail, sooner or later, to expiate dearly.

What was, in fact, our situation on the 4th of September? The Empire of Napoleon had fallen; with it had disappeared the perpetual threat of warlike adventures, of which it had been the fatal expression. France, it is true, in proclaiming a republic, might alarm dynasties; but, on the one hand, this form was only provisionary, and on the other it brought about pacific sentiments. Besides, this radical change destroyed the principal argument of Prussia, when she declared, and often repeated, that it was the Emperor and not the French people against whom she fought. The Emperor having quitted the scene, the nation was left exposed, and Prussia had no longer any plausible reason for crushing it. In its persistence it

[1] Such was also the opinion of our ambassador at Berlin. He did not cease to express this to the Government, who treated it with indifference. (See in the Pièces Justificatives, the extract from M. Benedetti's report of the 5th January 1868.

displayed clearly its projects of conquest, and at this point European interests were involved.

These interests were not sufficiently protected by the treaty of the neutral powers, which transaction was not sincere, and was planned by the English Cabinet to localize the struggle and protect Belgium. This treaty had been concluded in prevision of the victories of France, whose spirit of aggression was dreaded. But when France was crushed, it became an inconsistency and a danger, or at least a weakness, an abdication. It ought then to have been abandoned for a more resolute and conservative policy.

For it is an error condemned by history to surrender the development of human complications to the caprice of force. These must arise, continue, and increase, conformably to those moral laws which rule the relations between men. If these be violated, the most dangerous conflicts are prepared. It is thus that the preponderance of despots and conquerors is always followed by violent divisions. These truths become more evident, and their application more imperious, in proportion as manners become more refined by the progress of science and philosophy. They were present in the mind of those eminent statesmen who, after the first French Empire had crumbled to dust, had the task of reconstructing European politics. It was against France that they wanted, above all, to guarantee all the other States, but without intending to weaken her disproportionately; understanding well that no other power could take her place, and that if she were too much weakened by imprudent mutilations, she would be forced to disturb the general peace until she should regain the place assigned her by her traditions, and until she should re-establish a just proportion between her force and that of the neighbouring nations.

A more elevated sentiment inspired them. They desired to guarantee that mutual responsibility which exists between kings, and thus among peoples. They placed this principle as a dam to the revolutionary torrent; the torrent was not stayed, but the principle remains. There is not a political man, there is not a nation, which does not recognise it; if it were ever to be abandoned, with it would vanish the idea of justice, and Europe would be distracted by anarchy.

The Emperor Napoleon III. had often uttered these maxims in his official speeches, but in reality he had constantly neglected them, and the isolation to which he was reduced in his last trial was only the just punishment of the personal policy to which he had sacrificed France. He could not have any allies, for he had abandoned them all successively, thus giving them just cause to show their irritation on account of the services he had rendered them. England did not pardon him for the peace of Paris, nor Italy for that of Villafranca; Russia often reproached him with the insurrection in Poland; Spain with the treason of Mexico; Turkey for his interference in the Cretan expedition; Greece for his sudden change in favour of the Divan; the United States for his assistance at the Secession. In everything he had touched he had caused confusion, and it was impossible to guess to what system belonged his inconsistent combinations. Thus, when he madly provoked Germany, all the powers forsook him, and his reverses were welcomed with a satisfaction which the disorder of his rule explained only too well.

I found this sentiment confirmed by the unanimous language of the foreign press; it pained, without surprising me, but it seemed to me that it might be modified by the position the French republic was about to take before the neutral States, and before Germany herself. I said: "We have altered nothing in our policy, and, remaining what we have always been, we thought we should bring the neutrals to pronounce themselves in our favour."

All my efforts have been directed to this end. I do not know if any one more skilled would have succeeded where I failed. I doubt it. But I do not believe that any one could have been more conscientious or more zealous. I was under a strange delusion, for it did seem to me impossible that the European powers should allow the consummation of France's destruction without putting forth an effort to help.

The greatest among them could not open their annals without finding glorious instances of the devotion of our chivalrous nation. All had enjoyed her hospitality, had found her generous, kindly, ready for any sacrifice, and seeking no recompense. Commerce, arts, letters, had created between Europe and us a

moral unity not incompatible with the holy inspirations of humanity. How was it possible to suppose that such a past should be counted for nothing at a moment when a terrible disaster was crushing us, and that jealousy or selfishness could efface so many motives to help us?

Yes, I might have understood it, however painful to me, if the ruin of France could in any way have profited those States which decided on their course of action in so heartless a manner! But it was easy to prove to them, and this they knew, how much there was to fear from a transformation which, in annulling France, would insure to Germany a sovereign preponderance. No nation could be blind to dangers to which all were exposed. Was it necessary to point out to Russia the natural march of the conqueror towards the Baltic provinces, where skilful intrigues have long been preparing the success of its maritime ambition? Does not Austria know the fate in reserve for her, and is not the sacrifice of her German crown the inevitable price of her Hungarian one? Is not Italy directly threatened on the north, on the east, and even further still, where her legitimate influence is already opposed by a rivalry which will not be arrested? And does not England behold her political sceptre escaping her, that sceptre which she has held for centuries with so firm and respected a grasp? Does she then consent to retire from the affairs of the world, entrenched in her island amidst her economists, who preach sleep, and her agitators, who are shaking her old social edifice? Will she be able to enjoy her riches in peace when the entire continent submits to the law of a nation resolved to absorb everything to her own profit—mistress of tariffs and means of communication, and covering the seas with its merchant fleets?

Such is the picture which the future must have presented to the eyes of the statesmen of Europe who decided to suffer the destruction of France at the hands of Germany. Was it great boldness on my part to believe that not one of them would be willing to incur the responsibility of this common peril? And when their collective action would have sufficed to put an end to the terrible struggle which compromised the interests of all, was it not reasonable to ask of them an act which would have

been their glory, and which, in assuring a lasting peace, would have given an impulse to public prosperity, by which all would have profited ?

For myself, I humbly confess I have yet to learn how such an act was impossible,—how it is that not one single Minister was found to carry it into effect. It is an alarming characteristic of the times in which we live, and their future historian will find it hard to hide his astonishment and sadness when it falls to his lot to chronicle the ulterior motives which prompted those men who had the destinies of the world in their hands.

According to the statement of a Bonapartist writer, M. de la Tour d'Auvergne had, on the morning of the 4th of September, informed his colleagues that divers powers had engaged to negotiate a peace, founded on the integrity of territory,—the events of the day alone prevented their intervention.

It was rather extraordinary that M. de la Tour d'Auvergne, who, the next day, September 5th, did me the honour of coming to confer at length with me, in order to give me all the information possible, should have passed over so important a fact without notice. Neither have I ever, in the frequent long interviews I have had with Prince Bismarck, and other personages acquainted with his policy, seen the least indication to make me suspect the existence of such a fact. But at the moment in which I am writing, General Ducrot publishes, under the title *La Journée de Sedan*, the account of an interview of the French generals with Count von Moltke and Count Bismarck to agree upon the conditions of capitulation ; and in this account I find the cruel words, which are as cruel as they are decisive, taken from the reply of the Chancellor to General de Wimpfen :—

" Our course is clear : France must be chastised for her pride, and her aggressive and ambitious character. We desire, in short, to be able to insure the security of our children, and to that end there must be a direct line of demarcation between France and us. We must have a portion of territory, fortresses, and frontiers, which shall protect us for ever from any attack on her part."

I will not at present examine if the possession of two of our

provinces is an efficacious means of guaranteeing security to Germany. I shall find no difficulty in proving that she could not have chosen a more certain means of compromising it; but I quote this fragment to prove that the day following the capitulation at Sedan the conqueror had a clearly defined plan, which no power could have made him relinquish. Besides it appears, in all the diplomatic documents, and in all the communications, whether official or confidential, verbal or written, that Prussia has systematically refused all intervention, and that she has allowed no third party to speak in her name.

It is then in every way incorrect that any power made such advances to M. de la Tour d'Auvergne, or that Prussia ever intended to renounce the conquest of a part of our territory. Yet at the moment when the advent of the Republic seemed likely to change the aspect of affairs, we were ignorant of her intentions, and the representatives of foreign powers were no better informed than ourselves.

I have already said that, on the 5th of September, I received the visit of Lord Lyons, the English ambassador; the Prince de Metternich came on the same day; then the Chevalier Nigra, Italian Minister. All the members of the diplomacy presented themselves successively, all evincing a sincere desire to entertain the most amicable relations towards the Republic, and to contribute their services, if possible, towards procuring an honourable peace.

The English ambassador was full of cordiality and good-will. He reminded me that his Government had offered its mediation to France, which had refused it. He could not hide from me that public opinion in England was hostile to us. The influence of relationship acted strongly on the mind of the Queen. Nevertheless, commerce was disquieted by the prolongation of a war which was ruinous for all; and if the Government of the Republic succeeded in maintaining order, in inducing respect for discipline, in resisting the enemy, it would rapidly gain sympathies, which perhaps would change both the sentiments of the nation and the resolution of the Cabinet, until now decided to maintain perfect neutrality. He added that, as far as he was personally concerned, he had never been in great credit with the Emperor, nor with his Ministers, who

had not asked his counsel; that he loved France, that he ardently desired that she might rise from her present cruel position, and that I might, in any circumstances, count upon him, for he was ready to give us his concurrence to the utmost limit of his instructions.

I thanked him heartily, and begged him to make known to his Government that we were, above all, friends of order, convinced that the rigorous respect for laws was the first element in the defence, to which we desired to consecrate ourselves. Obstinate partisans of peace, we had, with all our might, opposed the mad war declared by the Empire against Germany; but as it was now engaged in, we were compelled to carry it on. The enemy had invaded our territory; it was marching on Paris, with the evident intent of taking possession of the city. It was our duty to oppose it. But the Cabinet of England was the last to mistake the import of such a struggle. It interested every State in Europe, whose equilibrium it threatened, and exposed it to formidable convulsions. If this truth had been recognised by all, the war would have ceased in an instant. Prussia would not have braved a coalition of the powers; it would have yielded to their requirements. England was in the same position as we were after Sadowa. We had not hesitated to cover Austria, and this mediation had rendered signal service to the two belligerents. I begged him to explain these considerations to Lord Granville. Besides, I did not limit myself to speaking of our common interests. I spoke of the honour of England engaged in preventing the ruin of old and faithful allies. To fail in this obligation was to submit to a loss of rank ever to be regretted. Our fate and that of Europe were in her hands. As a nation of the first rank, as the respected umpire in every serious difficulty, England's example would be followed by the other States. She had a noble part to play; she must not lose such an opportunity of increasing her authority.

Lord Lyons promised to transmit my words faithfully. I developed in detail the argument they embodied, when writing to M. Tissot, our representative in London, who replaced M. de la Valette, whom I had been obliged to remove from his post.

My interview with the Prince de Metternich was no less

amicable, and, from the first, he showed himself to be, what I have since proved him, simple, loyal, kind, well disposed, and fully comprehending the situation in which his country was placed by our misfortunes. He repeated to me what M. de la Tour d'Auvergne had said of the error of the Duke de Gramont, who hoped to be able to obtain effectual help from Austria. "It has never been considered," said he; "it is not impossible that M. Beust may have spoken of preparing 300,000 men if we had liberty, but it is just this liberty which has always been refused us. The Emperor and his Ministry will never brave the will of the Czar.

"Now, the latter has threatened that if we were to declare ourselves for France, he would join Prussia. Our hands are therefore bound; but we will do nothing against you; we will even aid you in everything that is reconcileable with our neutrality. We earnestly desire that you may be able to make peace; only we believe it impossible without the cession of Alsace. But why do you not demand the vote of the populations? We should be ready to support you in such a claim; and Prussia might perhaps desist if she found herself exposed to that."

I replied that I could not share this sentiment. I was revolted at the idea that, in the nineteenth century, conquest could establish a right of possession. I could not consent to appear to doubt the nationality of Alsace, and to have submitted the question to the vote would have had that appearance. At a moment when those brave populations were sacrificing their lives in order to remain Frenchmen, it was impossible to ask them to assure us of it by vote. We knew all the perils with which we were menaced; we were determined to brave them rather than voluntarily to yield. But now when France had just recovered the power of governing herself, we might hope that the great powers would give up that distrust which had separated us. We only wanted peace, and we offered something in addition to Austria, with whom our relations could only be amicable, since she had abandoned the Italian provinces. I therefore insisted with energy on her helping us. If England pronounced herself for us, if we succeeded in securing the support of Italy, she would no longer have any objection. Besides, in defending us she would be defending herself, for our ruin

was the prelude to her own. I hoped therefore that, with the aid of an ambassador whose enlightened and sympathetic sentiments she appreciated, France would find in the Cabinet of Vienna a powerful protector. M. de Mosbourg was appointed to repeat this to M. de Beust.

M. de Metternich appeared much interested. "I am not without hope," said he, "that if you can hold out some weeks, you will regain the sympathy of Europe. It will not be my fault if this deplorable struggle is not soon terminated."

My perseverance with the Italian Minister, M. le Chevalier Nigra, was necessarily still greater; and I can understand that on that account partly he was less eager for an interview with me than were his colleagues. He guessed what would be my requests, and regretted his inability to satisfy them. Now, the refusal on the part of Italy to give assistance to France was an act of severity, almost of ingratitude. I say almost, for here, as in every case, the Empire was taken in the net of its double and false policy. Having desired in 1866 to set Austria and Prussia in opposition, the Emperor did not know what line of conduct to adopt with regard to Italy, and he had himself thrust her into alliance with Prussia.[1]

The effect of this change of tactics was considerable; it gave an enormous strength to the enemies of France in the Peninsula, and there created that opinion on which the Italian

[1] This fact, which has been told me by persons in a position to know it best, is now officially established by the publication of M. Benedetti's book. Our ambassador in Prussia cites, in fact, a despatch from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Drouyn de Lhuys, dated 31st March 1866, in which is the following paragraph:—

"As for the negotiations opened by the Cabinet of Berlin with Italy, I can assure you there is no foundation for what has been reported to M. de Bismarck, with regard to an intervention on our part with the Cabinet of Florence. Our position with regard to Italy in this case is ruled by two important considerations. On one side, at the time of the Conferences of Varsovia, we have, as you know, declared to the Italians, that if they became aggressors in Venetia, they would act at their own risk. We could not encourage them to listen to the advances of Prussia, without taking upon ourselves a grave responsibility. On the other hand, we did not think that we ought to oppose any obstacle to the accomplishment of the destinies of Italy, by dissuading her from associations which it is her business to appreciate in entire liberty of judgment. It is thus that I expressed myself to M. Nigra. That is the whole truth of our views. I entirely approve your attitude and your language, and I shall feel obliged if you will inform me of all the details of this crisis."

Government supported its neutral policy. This neutrality was equally painful for the two nations; and the French judged it with just severity. M. le Chevalier Nigra knew this, and was embarrassed and sad; and I, on my part, could not avoid a certain degree of bitterness. Our conversation manifested these feelings, although, on both sides, we endeavoured to repress them. All that I said was prompted by the conviction I had that Italy was obliged, in honour, not to abandon us. She owed to us her independence; she could not allow ours to be destroyed. To forget our services, to remember only those of Prussia, was a violation of the conscience of all nations; and Italy, in committing such a violation, was preparing for herself serious difficulties in the future. Besides this, before demanding an auxiliary force (which we should have accepted afterwards, if it had been offered), we thought an agreement among the powers might suffice to terminate the war. This was so much to the interest of all that hesitation seemed to me impossible. A firm resolution would re-establish at the same time the peace of the world and the prestige of European Governments, at present in slight discredit in the eyes of their peoples.

M. le Chevalier Nigra did not contradict one of my assertions, and took his stand only upon the impossibility of isolated action on the part of Italy. She was ready to unite with other powers, and even to lead them, if they would follow. But nothing was to be done without the support of England or Russia. Now, the former obeyed the systematic indifference of Mr. Gladstone and the private inclinations of the Queen. The latter was the kind patron of Prussia, and would do nothing to thwart her. We could therefore expect nothing from Italy beyond kind sympathies, and her participation in any resolutions which should embody what the powers might decree in our favour.

The next day M. Nigra announced to me that he had received from his Government the order to inform us that the situation of Rome and the Papal States obliged the Italian Cabinet to cross the frontier, and probably to have recourse to an occupation. He pressed me to give my consent to this measure, while denouncing the Convention of 15th September 1864. I refused, from motives which I have explained in treating of Roman affairs. I replied that I neither had the power

nor the wish to oppose the action of his Government, but that, in our painful position, I could not interfere with the Pope, nor grieve my Catholic compatriots;[1] that I should oppose nothing, and that Italy could go to Rome upon her own responsibility. The National Assembly, which would shortly meet, would decide the question of temporal power, upon which my opinion had been long decided, and was well known, but that it did not belong to me to settle the matter.

To all these reasons was added another, which, to tell the truth, was, from a political point of view, the most considerable. I would not cause division among my fellow-citizens by an act whose importance would certainly have been exaggerated. The defence claimed the help of all, and it would have been unwise to offend any one needlessly. If the Cabinet of Florence had offered me an army on the condition of the abandonment of the temporal power, I should not have hesitated. But it confined itself to fair words, and left me free to postpone to a more favourable moment a solution which the nature of things rendered inevitable.

The representatives of the other powers gave me proofs of friendship no less unequivocal. The Spanish ambassador spoke in the warmest terms of the interest with which we inspired his country. The Russian representative dissipated in a few words the fear I had entertained for the effect which the proclamation of the Republic might have on the relations between us. He was willing to recognise with me that it was a necessity. "Provided," said he, "that it be not a symbol of disorder and propagandism, it will be no obstacle in the eyes of the Czar. He sincerely loves France, he desires the end of the war, but his relationship with the King of Prussia imposes on him great reserve. Thanks are even due to him for having remained neutral; many important men advised his active intervention. This he refused, and thereby showed himself to be of the same opinion as those who desire the success of France."

This opinion of M. Okounieff was not altogether correct; for in restraining Austria, the Cabinet of St. Petersburg had taken sides, and deprived us of the help of Vienna and Florence. It

[1] *Rome, and the French Revolution.* One volume 8vo. 1871. H. Plon, publisher.

became in reality the ally of Prussia, since it paralysed those who might have become ours. It may therefore be said that it decided the fate of the campaign, in leaving us to struggle with Germany. It prevented a general outburst, but it co-operated powerfully with the latter; Russia has assisted in German aggrandizement, and if she suffers she can only blame her own policy.

After these communications I could no longer be unaware of the disposition of the European Cabinets. We could not count on an armed mediation; but we might hope for diplomatic aid if Prussia would consent. In this view, the fall of the Empire had improved our position. Other nations were better disposed towards France, not from confidence in its Government but from interest in its weakness.

All those men who had kept apart from us through hatred of Imperial despotism, now drew near and encouraged us. Numerous meetings were held in England to send us the expression of their sympathy; deputations crossed the Channel to bring us their addresses. A similar movement took place in Italy, Hungary, and even in some parts of Germany; the question whether we should be able to resist occupied every mind. The blows which had shattered our forces had been so rapid and terrible that it was natural to believe that Prussia would triumph over us. This was the fear which was expressed on every hand. To dissipate it was for us a question of honour and security. I attempted to do so in the circular which appeared in the *Journal Officiel* of the 6th of September,[1] for some of the declarations of which I have been bitterly reproached. It is not for me to judge them. In making them, my aim had been chiefly to designate clearly our policy, and to rouse the courage of the people. I wanted to show that France, aggressive until the disaster of Sedan, from that moment continued the war only to defend her territory, and that Prussia, in carrying it on, only yielded to a desire for conquest. I added, that Europe could not associate in her enterprise, and that France anticipated its wishes in offering peace. This was already a great deal for our national pride. Who would have dared to go

[1] See Pièces Justificatives.

further? Who would have accepted, I will not say the abandonment of part of our territory, but silence upon the eventuality of such a condition? When I wrote, "Not an inch of our territory, not a stone of our fortresses," I only responded to the unanimous sentiment of the nation, and, I will add, to that of the whole of Europe.

The representatives of all the powers had given me the assurance that their Governments would never adhere to a treaty of peace which should mutilate France; and if the Prince de Metternich had spoken of the expedient of consulting the populations, it was for the very purpose of cutting short any proposition of annexation.

When I read my circular to my colleagues, M. Picard, whose sagacity and practical good sense I have fully proved, was the only one to criticise it. He requested the omission of the words, "nor a stone of our fortresses," as excluding the possibility of a treaty of peace requiring the dismantling of Metz and Strasbourg, which the English press affirmed to be a necessary condition. I replied that the more firm our attitude, the greater would be the chance of obtaining favourable conditions. We claimed the integrity of our territory; that of our fortresses was no less important, and when Strasbourg was heroically defending its ramparts, it was not possible to concede to Prussia the right to destroy them.

The fate of war has, it is true, decided against us, and it may be said that we imprudently allowed our retreat to be cut off; that the exigencies of our situation hindered useful negotiations, and that with more circumspection we might have compromised the powers of Europe, and attached them to our cause.

These, in fact, are conjectures which might be discussed, but their importance and probability arise principally from subsequent events. On the day following the 4th of September, we desired above all to meet the enemy, to oppose him with a population ready for combat, inspired by love for its country, resolved to make the greatest sacrifices in driving the invader beyond the frontier. We hoped by this means to induce Germany to pause, and to rouse France. Our language was necessarily clear and firm, and we thought it wrong to enfeeble it by any reserve, when it needed all the ardour and resolution of patriotism.

Besides, it was not to hatred, but justice, that our appeal was directed; it was peace and not war that we asked. We loyally conceded that the policy, whose consequences we had to accept, had been blameable, but that policy had never been ours, and we did not shrink from the idea of reparation, provided it did not mutilate France; it was only in the event of our offers being refused that we announced the intention of opposing a desperate resistance to an attack which had become unjustifiable.

I cannot yet understand how such a policy could bind the European Cabinets, and render their intervention impossible, when in proposing it they would only have acted in the name of humanity and their own interest. Two nations were destroying each other in an implacable struggle, and because one of them put forth exaggerated pretensions, the rulers of States thought they could remain indifferent; they allowed blood to flow, the country to be laid in ruins, without putting forth their power to arrest the wrong! And they excuse themselves by saying that the nation they were sacrificing lacked moderation! that they would have listened to her complaint, if she had been more correct! I know not how history will judge them; but, for my part, I can see, in the reasons behind which they entrenched themselves, only specious pretexts, and I remain convinced that whatever might have been our conduct, we should have been none the less systematically abandoned by them.

If we were condemned to renounce, at least for the moment, the active assistance of the great powers, we had nevertheless some reason not to despair of it entirely. After the first shock caused by the events of the 4th of September, Paris recovered herself, and apprehended the great duty which she had to fulfil. General Trochu urged an unbroken activity in the works of the Committee of Defence. Arms were distributed, the Guard Mobile was organized, the provisioning was being completed; the fabrication of ammunition, the clothing of troops and of National Guards occupied numerous workmen night and day. The city became serious and grave, and there was to be read on every countenance the firm resolution not to flinch before the enemy. The Minister of the Interior called the whole nation to the defence of France. "Think only of

the war," he wrote to the Prefects in his circular of the 8th September, "and of the measures to which this gives rise. Give calm and security, obtain in return union and confidence. Put aside all that is foreign to the national defence, or that might weaken it. Render me an account of all your operations, and depend on me to maintain you in the great work in which you are associated, and which ought to inspire us all with the most ardent zeal, since its object is the salvation of our country." The United States, Italy, Switzerland, Spain, and Portugal recognised our Government.[1] We thus satisfied the desires which we heard expressed on all sides. We were in a state to resist; and, far from being crushed by misfortune, the nation drew from it fresh energy. Determined upon resistance, it was still impossible to engage in it before making a last and decisive attempt to gain the intervention of the Cabinets of London and St. Petersburg. On the other hand, the Prussians while advancing on Paris remained silent, and might have been thought to be awaiting an overture on our part. This was the opinion of Lord Lyons, who had instantly judged it to be the settled plan of Count Bismarck to refuse any kind of intervention. He considered that if there were any ground for hope, it would rest upon a direct explanation between us and the Chancellor. Was it possible to avoid this cruel necessity? Was it not imposed upon us by all the authority which the feeble hope of an amicable arrangement could give? These reflections tormented me continually, and became more painful as we approached the moment for recommencing the struggle. In my eyes, the disaster of Sedan marked the end of the first period, in which the responsibility of events devolved exclusively upon the Empire; that which was about to commence was on our own responsibility. Before giving the signal of a resistance whose limit would be our strength, it was our duty to employ every means for arriving at an honourable peace, if possible. It was therefore necessary to know the intentions of Prussia, and to this end she must be compelled to quit her obstinate silence. On the 6th of September I wrote to M. Tissot, our representative in London, and I begged Lord Lyons to inform Lord Granville of

[1] See Pièces Justificatives.

my willingness to accept with gratitude the mediation of a neutral power, upon the basis of integrity of the territory; and also to inform him that an armistice was necessary for opening negotiations on the subject, and that it seemed impossible to me that this would be refused if the English Cabinet requested it.

At the same time I sounded the members of the diplomatic body upon the subject of the conditions upon which Prussia might consent to suspend hostilities. The Ministers of Italy, Spain, and Turkey placed themselves unreservedly at my service; but they felt that there was nothing to be hoped for without the concurrence of England or Russia.

It was this concurrence, therefore, which it was necessary to obtain, and no one seemed more fitted for this task than M. Thiers. His well-merited renown, the courageous and prominent part he had taken in the Corps Législatif since he had appeared in public life, his noble and patriotic conduct at the time that the war was declared, rendered him certainly the first man in the State; it was his own will alone that excluded him from the Government of the National Defence. In consenting to associate himself with it, he considerably strengthened it, and became its guarantee in the eyes of all Europe; at the same time, he gathered around him the large party of moderate, timid, and uncertain men, with whose support, even in critical times, a government cannot dispense.

But, from any point of view, it seemed difficult, after having retired on the 4th of September, for him to accept the mission offered him by his colleagues, from whom he had separated himself, without being willing either to blame or approve of their conduct. I had foreseen these objections, and I counted on his ardent patriotism for the resolution of the difficulty. France had such imperious need of his services that to refuse them would have been cruel. He alone was capable of pleading her cause at the tribunal of Europe, and if he were unsuccessful, he would have the conviction that the utmost efforts had been made. I told him all this and much more when I went to see him at his hotel, in the "Place Saint Georges," on the 9th of September, and warmly urged him to give his consent. He was confined to his bed, suffering from a cold, accompanied with fever. "You perplex me," said he, "by communicating a

proposition which I was far from expecting. You know my sentiments; they are not hostile to the Government of the National Defence; I desire its success, but should prefer to keep apart from it; you see I am not in a fit condition to be its messenger. That, however, is the least obstacle; the principal one is the hard-heartedness of the Cabinets of Europe. It would be painful to encounter their indifference, and I have the presentiment that such would be the result of the mission you offer me. Nevertheless, I am not so discouraged at our disasters as to have any difficulty in seconding the men who undertake to diminish them. I must request some hours' consideration; to-morrow you shall know my reply."

The next day he came to see me, brisk and well: the idea of giving his country a fresh proof of his indefatigable devotion had cured him. This is, in fact, one of the characteristics of this remarkable man; physically, as morally, he has inexhaustible resources, which confound those who are unacquainted with the wealth of his nature. For myself, while listening to his explanations of his motives for accepting the mission, I admired the simplicity and vigour with which, in spite of a host of reasons for sparing himself the fatigue, the danger, the annoyance of so thankless a task, a man of his age, who had many times discharged his obligation to his country, hastened to accept this fresh trial, without appearing to think of the merit of not refusing it. I had asked him to go to London; he offered to go also to St. Petersburg and Vienna, where he hoped to meet with a favourable reception. I thanked him warmly; I knew that he was intimately acquainted with Prince Gortschakoff, and that he would be well received by the Emperor. I did not hide from him that, reflecting on the coldness of the English Cabinet, I still held to the political ideas which had been those of my whole life; the union of the three powers situated in the centre and south of Europe, supported by the north-east, thus bringing about relations with those countries, and preparing the inevitable solution which will open up a new path to the East, causing a complete transformation. M. Thiers had the goodness to listen to me, although the system was very different from the one he had always defended. He allowed, nevertheless, that late events had singularly modified the con-

ditions of the problem. In the midst of our troubles and dangers, uncertain of our own existence, we could not think of definite combinations. Prudence consisted in reserve, in profiting by any good dispositions we might have the chance of meeting; and with regard to this, he thought as I did, that something might be done at St. Petersburg, where we had more friends than we had at first presumed.

Being in complete accord with him upon all important points, I acquainted him with two resolutions which much agitated me, and which would have been painful to take if they had not met with his entire approbation. The first related to my departure from Paris, the second to my journey to the Prussian head-quarters.

Day by day the enemy drew nearer. No obstacle impeded its progress. It was easy to foresee that we were about to be invested and cut off from France and Europe. If Paris had been an ordinary place, the political government would have had to withdraw entirely, leaving the defence to military authority. But we were obliged to think, first of all, of the difficulties to which she was exposed by her rank as a capital, with her population of two and a half millions, among whom the vilest passions were fermenting. Having become the central point of the Prussian attack, she was thus the fortress of the national defence. To abandon her to military administration alone was to run the risk of giving her up without combat through the certain explosion of seditions which it was impossible to suppress. It was by a moral rule, by civic direction, by the wisdom of counsels, and, above all, by the authority of example, that it was necessary to restrain her. A large city, exposed to the prospective of the sufferings and dangers of a siege, cannot be abandoned by those to whom she has given her confidence. She desires, with justice, that they may share her fate. They are her guarantee; they answer for her courage and become her hostages. I felt this keenly afterwards, when convinced that by going to London, where I was expected, I might lessen the severity of a necessary capitulation.

I yielded, nevertheless, to the entreaty of Paris, which would not consent to let me depart, and, shall I add, to the secret promptings of my own heart, which revolted at the idea of

quitting the battle-field where honour retained me? But on 11th September these motives for hesitation did not exist. I wanted to divide myself. I felt that the Minister of Foreign Affairs ought to keep in communication with Europe, but I considered that it was still more a duty not to leave Paris. I foresaw daily troubles, seditions, terrors, and rage, probably assaults; I was under the illusion that I might be useful, and that my place ought to be in the midst of my fellow-citizens who were delivered over to this terrible unknown. I had at that time some popularity; what better use could I make of it than to sacrifice it in the accomplishment of my duty? Nevertheless, the question was embarrassing. I submitted my scruples to M. Thiers, who was of my opinion, and thus scattered my doubts.

The second resolution was more delicate and more grave. Having obtained from England and Russia only sterile words of interest, I then claimed a direct intervention, if it were only to inquire of Prussia upon what conditions she hoped to reduce us; and I had conceived the project of going myself for information to M. Bismarck. I did not hide from myself one of the grave objections which such an enterprise might raise. Without speaking of the pain it could not fail to inflict upon me, I might be exposed to gratuitous humiliation, both compromising for the Government and prejudicial to the defence. The depositaries of a power which a revolution had just placed in our hands, we had to fear a disdainful refusal. Monarchical Prussia, intoxicated by victory, would thus find the means of humiliating Republican France in the eyes of Europe, and of ruining the credit of those who organized its resistance. I felt these dangers, but they did not influence me, for every consideration seemed to me to be inferior to the duty of risking everything in order to spare Paris the horrors of a siege, to save thousands of human creatures from a certain death. I expressed this to the Government one evening, and met with a coldness which would have amounted to a formal disapproval if I had consulted it officially. But I persevered none the less. My conscience spoke too loudly. I was ready to brave all in obeying it. I spoke of it to Lord Lyons, who approved, and proposed that I should ask Lord Granville to

be my intermedium. I accepted this eagerly. The 9th of September I sent him a confidential note, which he undertook to send to the Prussian ambassador in London, through the interest of the English Cabinet. This note was as follows :— "Will the Count Bismarck enter into a conference for the purpose of arriving at an armistice, and for discussing conditions of peace, and with whom will he confer?" The same day, Lord Lyons sent a courier to the Prussian head-quarters; and on my part, I wrote to M. Tissot to request him to persevere with Lord Granville. The secretary of the English embassade had difficulties of every kind to surmount; it was only after three days of fatiguing and perilous going and coming that he was able to see Count Bismarck. The latter confined himself to saying that he placed no obstacle in the way of my journey, but that the result would be subordinate to a preliminary question with regard to which the Count de Bernstorff was awaiting a communication from Lord Granville. This was to decide nothing, and to leave me in uncertainty. Time pressed, and I might now count by hours the interval which would elapse before the Prussian cannon would be heard under the walls of Paris. My anxiety was extreme, but I was resolved to make the attempt if I received any fresh indications.

M. Thiers received my communications, and strengthened me on this point with his approbation. He promised to spare no pains to obtain from Lord Granville the assurance that the negotiation I was about to attempt should gain the support of England. We both attached to this great importance. Isolated, we had a great chance of failing; by obtaining the support of the Cabinet of London we should involve all the neutrals, and we might thus hope for an honourable peace.

At the same time we had no right to conclude this peace; we could only arrange the preliminaries. I expressed to M. Thiers my ideas in regard to this. They appeared to me to arise from our exceptional situation. Sprung from a popular tumult, we did not pretend to represent France, and to stipulate in her name. We only wanted to place her in a position to be consulted. My first word in addressing Count Bismarck ought therefore to be a request for an armistice, with the object of convoking

an Assembly. To this Assembly belonged the sovereign decision of peace or war. But there was nothing to prevent us from a preliminary negotiation to determine the principal conditions of a treaty. I was ready to give my consent to any arrangement which might guarantee the security of Prussia, provided she should respect the integrity of our territory.

We then, M. Thiers and I, examined the different questions connected with the mission which he was about to fulfil, and after having agreed upon them, we separated, not without deep emotion on my part, which will be easily understood. I was more affected than I can tell with the courage with which our illustrious ambassador accepted the responsibility of the events with which he consented to associate himself. Nothing but the necessity which ruled us all could have determined me to appear as his leader, when I had as much reason to place myself under his orders as to admire him. But we had no leisure to indulge in scruples. The gravity of our position effaced everything else; yet it did not hinder me from being profoundly grateful to this noble citizen, who forgot himself once again for his country, and I instinctively felt that he would one day reap the fruit of the eminent service which he was about to render her.

The *Journal Officiel* of the 12th of September contained this notice, "M. Thiers, under the present circumstances, has not refused his services to the Government; he leaves this evening for London, thence he will go to St. Petersburg and Vienna."

That evening, M. Thiers left Paris, and in order to give an exact idea of the manner in which his mission was fulfilled, I cannot do better than let him be his own narrator. The reader will thank me for not analysing the report which he sent me the next day. I give it as it stands:—

"LONDON, *13th September* 1870.

"MY DEAR EX-COLLEAGUE,—I departed yesterday evening, as I promised you, and I believe I was the last to use the Railroad du Nord, for the Officer of Defence, charged with cutting off communications, told me he had awaited my arrival to blow up the bridge of Creil.

"I arrived at 7 A.M. in London, and having found no lodging anywhere, on account of the number of foreigners, especially Frenchmen, here, I was obliged to stay at the hotel of the embassade, where, through the efforts of M. Tissot, they have prepared me a kind of encampment. I have had an opportunity of observing, while receiving different persons this morning, that public opinion is more in our favour, and even that the announcement of my arrival had served to stir up some people, and this has rather reassured me as to the success of my mission, which is still to me very doubtful. 'So much the better,' some say; 'the Ministers will be obliged to explain themselves.' The *Times* itself has changed its tone. M. Tissot having eagerly placed himself at my disposal, I appointed him to make my arrival known to the English Cabinet. At noon punctually, Lord Granville came to me, wishing to spare me the trouble of going to the Foreign Office. The conversation was long and urgent on my part, but still amicable. It is impossible to detail its inevitable repetitions. The summary of it is pretty nearly as follows:—

"I first of all took great care to prove, by an exact account of the events which had brought about the war, that France had not desired it; that the Chamber itself had not desired it, and had only yielded to the Imperial power, always irresistible in its eyes; and that the last day especially, that is to say the 15th of July, it had only been drawn over by the guilty lie about a pretended outrage done to France.

"My account seems to have dispelled more than one error from the mind of Lord Granville, who appeared to have thought, from what the agents of the Empire had said to him, that in her heart France had wanted war, and that the dynasty had only taken the initiative. I think I have convinced him on this point. On this occasion we touched upon a subject which pre-occupied us some little time before quitting Paris,—that of a Bonapartist intrigue tending to re-establish the Empire, with the Prince Imperial at its head and the Empress as Regent. Lord Granville treated this idea as chimerical and impossible to be realized, not deserving attention. Informations that I have gained elsewhere prove that there is in it nothing serious, that the partisans of the Empire who have taken refuge here do not

believe it themselves, nor make it the object of action. The Bonapartist intrigue, if it existed, would have more likelihood in the Prussian camp. Lord Granville told me that the Court of Prussia, not wanting, or not appearing to want, to treat, would perhaps make use of this pretext, alleging that the Imperial Government alone had, in its opinion, a stable character, that the new Government was the offspring of a popular movement, that it had no legal existence, and that in treating with us they might be treating with nobody.

"This objection, which Lord Granville did not give as his own, gave me an opportunity of saying that the Chamber might have seized the power, if it had been decided enough; but by its hesitation it had given place to a popular movement, that from this movement has sprung the present Government, that it was idle and dangerous to dispute about its origin, and that it was needful to regard its actions, which were indisputable. (Lord Granville several times nodded approval.) I added that the Republic was at present the Government of all; that causing no party to despair, because it realized definitely the wish of none, it suited all; that all reasonable men were unanimous in sustaining it, because to the merit of not rousing party spirit was added that of being at this moment the true Government of the National Defence, for all parties could concur in the common defence, without having the vexation of saying that they were working for an adversary; that, in short, it was in the hands of honest men, well intentioned, having until now made every effort to maintain order; that as for myself, I too thought it so, since I was in London now, and ready to go further, for the purpose of persuading all the Courts that the wisest thing for France and Europe to do was to aid the present Government.

"Lord Granville quite agreed with all I said on this subject, and he only named it as a possible objection of Prussia if she should seek a pretext for not treating with the Government. He even asked me why you had not convoked the next Assembly with the shortest possible delay. I replied that present circumstances rendered it impossible. He seemed to want to prove that he did not speak for himself, but for Prussia, whose ill-will we had to try and prevent.

"At length we came to present circumstances, and I asked

earnestly what England was willing to do, reminding him of our forty years' alliance, of our association in arms in the Crimea, and our loyal conduct during the war in India. I asked if England would refuse us all hope of support at a moment when the madness of the fallen Government had left us disarmed before a power which did not attempt to hide its passion for aggrandizement.

"Upon this, Lord Granville was perplexed between his desire to prove to me his friendly feeling for France, and his equally strong desire gently to evade my importunity. He continually repeated that England would gladly come to our aid, but that, not being willing to risk war, because she really had not the means, if she insisted in the name of the neutrals, she would expose herself to the displeasure of Prussia, who would not hear of their intervention, and by that means she would damage our cause instead of serving it. As I replied that by keeping to this plan she would do nothing, that she would lose rank by letting the greatest of modern revolutions take place without her, and in spite of her, he defended himself by saying that, on the other hand, the Germans complained that England was doing too much for us, and that she was altogether partial for France. I replied, that doubtless, whatever was done, in such a situation one was exposed to be accused by one side or the other, but that between two suitors one must be right; that evidently this was France, for she was not the conquering power, endeavouring to change the entire face of Europe, and yet it was Prussia which was left to do as she pleased, and, according to her, that simple inaction was partiality. Besides, I added boldly, do you know what is said throughout France? That your Queen is ruled by family affections, and that the Cabinet is in this case influenced by her.

"'I am deeply devoted to my Sovereign,' replied Lord Granville; 'but I am an English Minister, and the wish of my country is the only one I consult.'

"In London, it is thought that Lord Granville is influenced by the private feelings of the Queen; but I must say that he seemed to me to be chiefly guided by a policy of inaction, which consists in avoiding all great affairs. Formerly, England would have shuddered at the thought of allowing the consum-

mation of such a revolution as that which is being accomplished before our eyes without taking part in it, as a great power ought to do. Now, although recognising that Prussia is becoming formidable, she prefers to close eyes and ears rather than see it, or hear it said. She is chagrined, disquieted; but the idea of a great war frightens her; and she shrinks from the idea of making advances which might be repulsed, and which might place her between the alternative of bearing an affront and having recourse to arms, almost as much as from war itself. I said this to Mr. Gladstone, the report of which interview I will send you. I said to him: 'England, which was offended when Napoleon said she was exclusively a maritime power, leaving her legitimate place when she interfered with continental affairs, England now allows that he was right; for certainly she is doing what he wanted her to do, and is leaving the Continent to itself, without daring to have an opinion on what is passing.' Mr. Gladstone made no reply, and appeared both sad and annoyed.

"Yet interest is being awakened by degrees, the old English pride secretly complains, and would burst forth if the Parliament were assembled; but there is no one in London except Mr. Gladstone, and Lord Granville, who was there on account of my visit. The Ministers therefore do as they please, yielding to this disinclination for action, and they appear annoyed when that which they are allowing to take place is clearly shown to them.

"For the rest, I have personally only to acknowledge their polite reception of me, and the interest which they express for France. When I said to Lord Granville that this interest came to nothing, he replied that they had done something; that they had constituted themselves our mediators in transmitting to Prussia a communication equivalent to a proposition for treaty, and that we must await the reply.

"I replied that that was a very small affair; that, doubtless, we must await the reply, but that it was of no more importance than the request (I did not yet know the reply, which has arrived); that something more was needed, something which should give more character to the intervention of England. He replied that of course, if there were anything to be done (apart

from all idea of war), he should not oppose it; but that he was sure that the intervention of the neutrals in this affair was in the highest degree disagreeable to Prussia, and that better conditions might be obtained by conferring directly with her, than by conferring with her in the presence of the neutrals. 'And why,' he added, 'should not M. Jules Favre confer directly with Count Bismarck? What objection would he have to making such an advance?'

"This reminded me of what you had said, that you were ready to brave all perils and annoyances in going to the Prussian head-quarters; and I replied, without binding you in any way, that, while ignorant of the resolution you might take, I did not think you would oppose such a course, but that we must first of all insure a favourable reply, and a reception befitting the representative of France; that England must be the medium of such a proposition by strongly recommending it, and by thus guaranteeing its loyal execution.

"Upon this, Lord Granville said that he would consider the question, and consult with Mr. Gladstone. I then begged him either to convey a letter from me to Mr. Gladstone, to request an interview, or to ask one for me, and to press the point. He replied that it was useless to write, and that he would reply to me immediately. A quarter of an hour after, I received a line from Lord Granville, announcing the visit of Mr. Gladstone for six o'clock.

"At six o'clock Mr. Gladstone came to the French embassade, where I lodged. I found him grave, gentle, amicable, but profoundly saddened by European events. 'The reply we looked for has come,' said he; 'here it is, read it.' I do not need to repeat it, since it is in your possession. This response, you will guess, made me shudder. In affecting not to be able to treat with the French Government, because it would be incapable of insuring obedience, M. de Bismarck showed what he would exact. Mr. Gladstone and myself were careful not to say a word about the conditions insinuated rather than expressed in this reply. I did not desire to bring them into discussion. I contented myself with saying, that the present Government would be obeyed by the troops as by the citizens, so long as nothing should be required of them repugnant to

their patriotism. Then immediately we returned to the idea mentioned by Lord Granville this morning, as the most practical, viz., the journey of M. Jules Favre to the Prussian head-quarters. 'When they meet,' said he, 'it will no longer be a question of whether they can or cannot treat.' 'Yes,' I replied, 'but I cannot promise for M. Favre. I can only say one thing, which he has often repeated to me, that, in the hope of bringing about an honourable peace, he would be ready to brave the greatest dangers, or, in lack of dangers, annoyances, especially that of going to the Prussian head-quarters. We must therefore await his reply. But this is not all: England must quit her inaction; she herself must propose the interview we speak of, and claim it as due to Europe and entire humanity.' 'Without doubt,' said Mr. Gladstone, 'England would be the medium of this proposition.' 'So let it be,' I replied; 'but she cannot confine herself to the simple part of a messenger; she ought to speak as befits her dignity, her greatness, the high sentiments she professes. In bearing the message of peace, she must claim its acceptance as a duty towards humanity, horrified at the blood shed in abundance by two great civilized nations.' 'Yes,' replied Mr. Gladstone, 'Lord Granville will say that.' 'It is not enough,' I added; 'England must not keep to the language of a clergyman preaching charity; she must speak in the name of Europe; she must express her feelings upon what is going on now. England must say that humanity wants peace, but she must also speak of the nature of this peace; she must add, that a limit must be set to this effusion of blood by means of an equitable and lasting peace, which shall deal no more blows to European equilibrium than it has already received.'

"Mr. Gladstone said, 'Yes, Lord Granville will say that.' I insisted and obtained that he should be still more decisive, repeating with the greatest warmth that, if England did not speak as a European power, she would abdicate her ancient position in the face of the world, and in presence of the blood which would be shed under the walls of Paris, in presence of the colossal power about to rise in the centre of Europe, she would seem to say that it mattered little to her, entrenched as she was in her insular position; that she might let the horrors of the war continue, and Europe do as best she might.

"It was eight o'clock in the evening. I begged Mr. Gladstone, who was about to rejoin Lord Granville, to request of him for me another interview before midnight, at any hour convenient for him. Lord Granville was dining in town. I then wrote him an urgent letter (you see what importunity the position required, such as one could never have used for himself), to ask to see him again. Worn out with fatigue, for, during forty-eight hours I had passed my time in going and coming, or on the journey, I ordered one of our young assistants to watch, and awaken me if an answer arrived. It came this morning, and after explaining his silence the evening before on the ground of a dinner at Holland House, and by the late reception of my letter, Lord Granville announced his visit for eleven o'clock. I await him. I shall add to this despatch the details of our interview."

"*Wednesday, 14th September,* 11 A.M.

"I have just seen Lord Granville. I found him still more amicable than yesterday, but still fearing to compromise England by approaching the conflagration which is devouring the centre of the Continent. He told me that he had written to Lord Lyons relative to the attempt M. Jules Favre might make in going to the Prussian camp, which England would support with all her strength. He first asked me if M. Jules Favre would be willing to do this, especially after the reply received yesterday by Prussia. To that I replied, as yesterday, that I thought M. Jules Favre was prepared for the most painful sacrifice in the interest of a speedy and honourable peace, but I could promise nothing in his name, not being authorized. I then returned to our conversation of yesterday, and I again insisted that England, while requesting the reception of M. Jules Favre at the Prussian camp, and that an honourable one, should not confine herself to play the part of a simple messenger, which would be too modest a one for her; and I insisted that the English Cabinet should demand, *in the name of humanity,* the cessation of this horrible effusion of blood; and in the *name of the general interest,* a peace which should cause the equilibrium of Europe no more disturbance than it had already received. I added that Mr. Gladstone had approved of this double request in the name of humanity, and in the name of the equilibrium of Europe.

35667

"Lord Granville appeared on all occasions equally careful not to put his finger between the cogs of a wheel that might seize the finger, then the hand, then the entire person. *He did not say no*, but he wanted to confer with Mr. Gladstone, whom he did not see yesterday, and I have appointed to meet him this afternoon at half-past four at the Foreign Office.

"My credentials being upon the table, and bearing the address of Lord Granville, he said to me, 'I believe that this packet is for me.' 'Yes, my Lord, it is for you. They are my credentials, which I did not give you yesterday, so anxious was I to enter on the subject of my visit.' He smiled, saying that these formalities were superfluous at such a time. He opened the packet, read it, and added: 'I receive it, although I ought not to do so, our Government not having recognised yours; but you see that in fact our relations are just what they would be if the recognition had taken place.'

"I had proposed to treat to-day the question of recognition, and I seized the opportunity which now offered itself. 'My Lord,' said I, 'you speak continually of moral support, when material support is impossible; but here is one means of giving the French Government a strong moral support—this would be to recognise it.' 'Doubtless,' Lord Granville replied. 'You see, by the communications we have had with you, that we act precisely as we should towards a recognised Government; but nothing has yet given to the Government established in Paris on the 4th of September a fixed character, and we should fear to go too far, or to act hastily in recognising it. If to-morrow, for example, a sudden shock overturned it, what figure should we cut? If any vote had given your country the opportunity of sanctioning the new Government, we should not hesitate. But why defer the elections?' I repeated that circumstances had prevented them from taking place sooner; that the result of the elections was certain; that they would send a majority of Conservative-Liberals, disposed, like myself, to maintain the present Government; that if it were such a manifestation that England desired, previous to recognising the Government, she might instantly recognise it, for the Government would be as necessary in a month as it is to-day.' 'Yes,' replied Lord Granville, 'but a shock? Who can answer for

that?'. 'That,' said I, 'depends more upon Europe than upon us. If the moderate Government now at the head of affairs be not properly treated, if it be repulsed, no one can answer for what may happen.'

"This brought forward all the questions already treated of, and I insisted no further. But Lord Granville did not appear to me altogether opposed to a recognition. I am to see him again at the Foreign Office at half-past four. A. THIERS.[1]

"*September* 14, 1870."

This despatch proved clearly that the illustrious negotiator had spared nothing in order to succeed, but that his efforts encountered a determination impossible to alter. England, however, had consented to become our intermedium to facilitate my interview with Count Bismarck. As for a mediation, she would only offer it, as Lord Granville wrote to Lord Lyons on the 14th September, "in case of the advance of a common basis of negotiation accepted by the two belligerents." It was therefore necessary for us either to renounce all attempt at an arrangement, or submit to the preliminary condition of a personal interview at the Prussian head-quarters. M. Thiers was right in saying to the Queen's Secretary of State, that I was ready to surmount the painful feelings which such a trial stirred within me. I was resolved to expose myself to anything rather than to the reproaches of conscience for having perhaps neglected a means of putting an end to the misfortunes of my country.

Meanwhile, decided not to recoil for want of boldness, I was obliged not to appear to act precipitately, or without taking all the precautions reconcileable with the execution of my design. This is why I had taken advantage of the good-will of Lord Lyons, and sent an inquiry through Lord Granville as to whether Count Bismarck would consent to see me. The reply sent by Count de Bernstoff, which made M. Thiers shudder when Mr. Gladstone communicated it to him, was truly the opposite of encouraging. I give it below, with my reply, which I sent in a telegraphic despatch to M. Thiers on the 14th of September, before receiving his letter.

[1] See, in the Pièces Justificatives, my despatch of September 16, in reply to the above letter.

"PARIS, *September* 14, 1870.

"Lord Lyons has just left me; he has brought me a telegram from the head-quarters, transmitted by London. I think you will find it in the possession of Lord Granville. Here is the translation of it:—'What guarantee is there that France, or at this moment the troops of Metz and Strasbourg, will recognise any arrangements into which we might enter with the Government now existing in Paris, or with those which will probably succeed it?' This is my reply, and, after hearing it, Lord Lyons asked me to formulate it in writing:—'The guarantees justly required by Count Bismarck can be furnished both from a political and military point of view. From a political view, the Government of National Defence will sign an armistice, and immediately convene an Assembly, which will ratify the Treaty of Peace agreed upon between the Prussian Government and that of France. From a military point of view, the Government of the National Defence offers the same security as a regular Government, since the Minister of War is obeyed in all the orders he gives. Whatever may be agreed upon for an armistice will therefore be punctiliously executed without delay.' You will add to this declaration whatever your wisdom may suggest. I thought it right to say to Lord Lyons, that peace was not only to be desired in the interest of humanity, but that it would be favourably received by France, provided that it were honourable and solid; that is to say, provided it included the integrity of our territory. Any other condition would be rejected. For four days Paris has been transformed. We have more than 200,000 National Guards, and more than 100,000 Gardes Mobiles, all well armed, and filled with courage. Our army exceeds 80,000 men, resolved on the greatest valour. With this we are waiting full of confidence. But, for my part, I hope that this strong position may warn the enemy, and procure for us an honourable peace. I know that your sentiments are mine, and I hope that you will have the glory of insuring their success."

The same day I received from M. Thiers the following telegram, in which he approved of my reply, and informed me of the last resolutions of Lord Granville:—

"*Wednesday, 14th September* 1870.

"I have just left the Foreign Office, after having seen Lord Granville for the second time to-day. He showed me your reply to Count Bismarck's communication, which I find here in returning to the hotel of the embassade. I consider it excellent. Lord Granville entirely approves of it. After speaking some minutes on this subject, he told me of his conversation yesterday with Mr. Gladstone. I had foreseen that he would withdraw something from the concessions which Mr. Gladstone had made to me yesterday. I wanted to recover them, but in vain; and these are the definitive resolutions of the British Cabinet. If at an opportune moment you think it right to confer with Count Bismarck at the Prussian camp, England will be your intermedium, will bear to the Prussian camp the expression of your desire, and will strongly approve of it as the most simple means of placing the belligerents in a position to explain themselves, and to obtain an understanding, and she will express her desire that for the sake of humanity this effusion of blood may soon cease, and calm be restored in Europe by means of a peace equally honourable for both parties.

"I was about to recommence my remonstrances, when Lord Granville interrupted me by saying: 'Do not insist further. You have already changed our plans; you force us to do more than we intended to do, for we wanted to be simple intermediums, without adding any solution; but to make us advise a peace which should not disturb the equilibrium of Europe more than it is at present disturbed, is to make us enter into the negotiation, and take a part for one solution against another. I do not know if in the future we shall have to go further; but at present we are going a step beyond the limits we had traced for ourselves; be satisfied with this, and do not ask us to do what we cannot do.'

"I was sad and discontented with an ancient ally, which afforded us so little assistance in our great peril, but I did not wish to run the risk of irritating without gaining anything. I have certainly overcome to some extent their inertia. I have moved them, but unhappily without drawing them out of their obstinate abstention. I told them that their conduct of to-day resembled that of France in 1866. They feel this; but to

encounter bravely the present peril in order to avoid a still greater one in the future, exceeds the actual courage of Europe, and it is but just to say that the unprepared state of all the European powers explains their inertia, though it does not justify it. All that I have been able to gain is to clear away some of the obstacles which oppose Lord Lyons in his friendly intentions towards us.

"I feel convinced that they would prefer keeping me here to seeing me take my departure for Russia. This only makes me more anxious not to delay my departure. However, I think it right to await your reply to my present communication.

"I thank you for your despatch of to-day. Although in the midst of so much distress, I am happy in knowing that Paris is faithful and well disposed.

"Rest assured of my esteem and friendship.

"A. THIERS."

Without taking a moment's repose, M. Thiers quitted London and embarked at Hull for St. Petersburg, on Saturday, September 17th. In the afternoon of the 15th he had again seen Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville. He learned from the latter the contents of the despatch which treated of my proposition to M. Bismarck. "It is good," wrote M. Thiers to me, "and recommends strongly enough the acceptance of your proposition to go to the Prussian camp. England's first step is taken. I do not despair of seeing her do more. I trust my endeavour to bring about an intervention on her part is not entirely lost." My communication was then transmitted with the English one, but I was unaware of the fact. The 16th and 17th passed without bringing any news. My anxiety can be guessed. Lord Lyons sympathized in this, and expressed the most kindly and cordial sentiments; he could not understand this delay. The Prussians were under the walls of Paris. They might commence the assault at any moment. I resolved to depart without receiving the reply from the Prussian camp.

CHAPTER IV.

JOURNEY AND INTERVIEW AT FERRIÈRES.

I PREPARED for my departure with the greatest secrecy. I knew the Government would be opposed to it, but I was determined to act in spite of its wishes. It was perhaps wrong; but the motives which prompted me were so powerful that I was obliged to yield to them, or withdraw from office. Under ordinary circumstances, I should have employed the latter means in order to reconcile my conscience with my political duty. I have felt many times since, in a similar position, the painful obligation of occupying a post in which one is forced to accept the responsibility of political acts of which he disapproves. Possibly we may have exaggerated that law of solidarity which has constantly set at naught the views of the minority. After all, its chief inconvenience was in sacrificing individuals, and if, as we thought, unity of defence and public peace have gained thereby, we have nothing to regret.

But at that moment, when the war took a new phase, when the siege of Paris was the prelude of the greatest calamities, I could not consent to remain in ignorance of the enemy's designs. I wanted to force him to unfold them, making the leaders of the Prussian army feel the responsibility of continuing this disastrous struggle. I desired above all to bring about a speedy convocation of an Assembly, which might relieve us of our immense burden, and pronounce, with the right of sovereignty which the nation alone can exercise, upon the redoubtable question of concluding a peace or pursuing the war. I had, it is true, engaged in the political conflict by my declaration respecting the integrity of territory, but I believed then, as I do still, that I interpreted the thought of France. I do not seek the proof of this in the numerous manifestations of sympathy and adherence which I then received, though they well merit

being taken into consideration. I, as a sincere and reasonable man, ask the opinion of my country, and I believe I may affirm that it unanimously approved my ultimatum. It is easy to say, now that the issue is known, and we have to confront our calamities and our burdens, that it would have been wiser to have resigned ourselves at once to a cession of territory. I remain persuaded that this so-called wisdom would have been a weakness and an error. And certainly my conviction must be profound for me to adhere to it, when I reflect that by abandoning it we might have been able to keep Metz, for the loss of which we shall never console ourselves. But, wise or imprudent, no one would have accepted such submission to a destiny which it seemed still possible to avert. An Assembly would have rejected it. I saw then what an enormous advantage there would be in convoking it. The defence and the negotiations would have derived from it a strength which we could not give them. On the other hand, Prussia would have no interest in refusing it, unless she intended destroying the Republic and restoring the Empire.

I was much surprised that these truths, which appeared so evident to me, did not force themselves upon my colleagues; but I knew too well their intentions to try to alter them. They were ruled principally by the fear of unsuccess, of weakening the defence. Others, moreover, did not share in my desire to arrive at a reconciliation.

Exaggerating the noble instinct of national honour, they believed in the necessity of a proud and obstinate resistance. They, with many other French and foreign politicians, thought that Prussia would not be able to support a long campaign, and that, if kept at bay for a month, she would be obliged to retire. They considered that any advance on our part would be a humiliation and a danger, an expedient that would deprive us of all chance of inflicting on the invaders the sanguinary and well-merited lesson they came into the heart of the country to learn.

This was certainly the opinion of the majority in Paris, and the idea of braving it naturally pained me. It did not, however, deter me from my purpose, being strengthened by the reflection that if I ran the risk of an affront, I compromised

myself only, and should be able to exculpate the Government from all blame, by allowing myself to be disavowed by it, and taking upon myself alone the weight of public anger.

I was obliged, however, to take General Trochu into my confidence, as well as the Minister of War. Their concurrence was indispensable to enable me to quit Paris, and pass the outposts. I informed them of my intention, at the same time begging them to observe secrecy; thus they were in nowise associated with what I was about to do.

The evening before my departure, in a circular published in the *Officiel* of the next day (which will be found in the Pièces Justificatives), I endeavoured, by placing the responsibility of the war upon the Empire, to bring the mind of the country to the thought that Prussia had a right to demand a just reparation; but that if she refused this, she proved her clearly defined plan of annihilating us, and thus imposed upon us the duty of a desperate defence. This is the opinion which I have always expressed, and it was this which I intended to repeat to Count Bismarck.

On Sunday the 18th September, a little before seven o'clock A.M., I took my seat in a hired carriage, accompanied by my sous-chef du Cabinet, the Baron de Ring, by M. Hendlé my secretary, by a captain of the army, and by another excellent man, whom I have pleasure in naming on account of his courage and devotion, Lutz, agent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The information I had received the evening before had not enlightened me as to the position of the head-quarters. Lord Lyons had discovered that it was at Lugny, but was about to be removed the next day. He had interrogated several persons, and thought he might assure me that it was at Grosbois. We therefore directed our course to the Porte de Charenton; I was supposed to be going to visit the fort, where an officer was ready to accompany me for a parley.

At the Porte several National Guardsmen approached to salute us; not one suspected the object of our journey. We halted at the fort; the officer whom we found there mounted his horse, and, accompanied by a trumpeter, we set out for Maisons-Alfort.

This was the last village occupied by our troops. All the houses were deserted. When we turned the corner of the street, which led to the high-road, an ecclesiastic threw himself before our horses, warning us of the danger we should incur in proceeding. I calmed him by telling him we were only going a few steps further. We then entered the long avenue leading to Creteuil.

The trumpeter marched in front, sounding his clarion. All was silent and deserted. We descended from the carriage and walked; presently we saw some cavalry stationed on both sides of the avenue; we walked towards them. By a singular chance they proved to be young soldiers from Schleswig. The conquered people had become in their turn an instrument of oppression and conquest in the hands of Prussia. Our officer had to submit to having his eyes bandaged, and we proceeded thus as far as Créteil, where we came upon the enemy's outposts. An officer, having ascertained my rank and mission, gave us an escort, which accompanied us to Villeneuve St. George's, where we should meet the General commanding the corps de l'armée.

What a journey was this! How can I depict the humiliation and pain that afflicted me! It was my first glimpse of Prussian soldiers on French soil; the sight grieved me to the heart. Long lines of them bordered the route; scornful mocking countenances regarded us with curiosity. The fields were *choked* with bivouacs, horses, waggons, and artillery. Everywhere was presented the heart-rending spectacle of devastated dwellings, houses broken open and ransacked, débris of all kinds scattered pell-mell before the doors. It seemed impossible that such ravages could have been accomplished in so short a time. At half-past twelve we arrived at Villeneuve St. George's, which was filled with soldiers. They made us get down at the house of one of the notaries of the country. Here all the furniture had disappeared. In the cabinet where the Prussian post had been installed, was lying on the floor some women's clothing, attesting a precipitate flight. We were shown into the study, where were scattered about some forgotten papers in their cases. They respectfully placed a guard at the door, whose business it was to prevent us from quitting the apartment.

We waited until five o'clock, not without some disquietude

on account of such lengthy preliminaries. The officer charged with our surveillance said, in answer to our question, that the General had not come in. He entered at length, followed by rather a strong escort, and begged us, with extreme courtesy, to accept his hospitality in the château he occupied. To have refused would have been unpolite. Besides, necessity forbade it; we could not find lodging. The General informed me that the head-quarters were at Meaux. He had no orders, and knew no more than myself whether the Chancellor of the Northern Confederation would receive me. I had foreseen this, and had written a letter in Paris to Count Bismarck. It was as follows:—

"MONSIEUR LE COMTE,—I have long thought that, before seriously entering upon hostilities under the walls of Paris, an honourable arrangement ought to be attempted. The person who had the honour to see your Excellency two days since, has informed me of a similar desire on your part. I have come to your outposts to place myself at the disposal of your Excellency. I am waiting for you to name the time and place at which I can have the honour of conferring with you.—I have the honour to be, your humble servant, JULES FAVRE."

The General called one of his officers, M. le Prince de Biron, who immediately mounted his horse and set off for Meaux with my message. He returned the next day, Monday the 19th, at six o'clock in the morning. He gave me the reply of Count Bismarck.

"MEAUX, 18*th September* 1870.

"I have just received the letter which your Excellency has had the goodness to send me, and I shall be happy if you will do me the honour to come and see me to-morrow at Meaux.

"The bearer of this message, the Prince de Biron, will arrange for your Excellency to be conducted across our lines.—I have the honour," etc.

I requested to set out at once, but the escort which was to accompany me could not be ready until nine o'clock. I was obliged to wait. I walked with M. Hendlé in the magnificent park which surrounded the château of M. de Balzac, where I had passed the night. The morning was splendid; a fog of

azure floated above the graceful landscape, lighted up by a radiant sun. A thousand sentiments oppressed me. Seeing at the horizon the outline of Paris clearly defined, with its hills, its monuments, its churches, its fortifications, I could not realize that in a few days this large and beautiful city was to be given up to destruction. It seemed that by my ardent wish to save it, I should be able to accomplish my object. I then reviewed all the reasons I had for hope. Justly proud of successes which exceeded all its expectations, Prussia might hesitate to compromise them in a fresh struggle. This short campaign sufficed for her glory, and permitted her to replace in its scabbard the sword before which Europe would henceforth bow. She would thus have the means of restoring the numerous citizens, whom duty had rendered soldiers, to agriculture, commerce, and social life; she would add to the prestige of victory that of wisdom and moderation. She would attract the sympathy of all, even that of France, once more her own mistress. Then would open for the world a new era. Science and liberty would firmly unite the nations, and our dear country, profiting by her misfortunes, reforming her institutions, giving free scope to her genius, might yet hope for a glorious and prosperous career.

Alas! these were but illusions; reality was shortly to dissipate them. In returning to the château to prepare for our departure, I saw towards Paris a thick black smoke. They told me Choisy was in flames. I suppressed the feeling of anger which seized me, and we started for Meaux.

The journey was a painful one. At every step the carriage was stopped by columns of soldiers going in an opposite direction: they poured down the road like a torrent. All the villages we passed through were in ruins. I got out to visit one, and I could not avoid exchanging bitter words with the officers who accompanied us. This sacking of habitations appeared to me a revolting barbarism. At the door of one poor house, where everything was ransacked, three women and a child were in tears. They prayed us, on bended knees, to rescue them. It was heart-rending; it seemed to me that I beheld a scene from Saint Grégoire de Tours. The Prince de Biron, who commanded our escort, seemed himself deeply touched by this

spectacle. He related to me that the evening before he had paid an old peasant woman the price of a cow which had just been taken from her. Such misery at the gates of Paris appeared to me like a horrible dream, and my detestation of the war was redoubled.

The heat was most oppressive. We advanced slowly. It was half-past three. We were slowly ascending a hill, which exhausted our horses, when we were joined by a horseman riding at a gallop. It was Count Hatzfeld, first secretary of Count Bismarck. He told us that the King had that very morning left Meaux for the château of Ferrières. Count Bismarck, who preceded him, had just passed us, and begged us to turn back, as he was about to do himself. We retraced our steps. When we arrived at the little village of Montry we were forced to stop, for our horses refused to go further. We went into a farm which had shared the common fate. Two peasants were wandering among its ruins. They told us that they had been pillaged three times, and that now nothing was left; everything was destroyed, down to the frames of the windows. After waiting half an hour, we saw three horsemen approaching, followed by a numerous escort. One of them was tall, wearing a white helmet bordered with a lace of yellow silk. It was Count Bismarck. He descended at the farm where I was standing.

"I regret," said I, "not to be able to receive your Excellency in a place more worthy of you. Nevertheless, these ruins are not perhaps irrelevant to the conversation that I have had the honour to solicit. They demonstrate eloquently the extent of the evils to which I desire to put an end. We will, with the permission of your Excellency, sit down here, and commence our conference."

"No," replied the Count; "there is probably not far off a house in a better state of preservation, and more suitable to our conference."

"Yes, truly," said one of the peasants; "ten minutes' walk from here is the château of La Haute-Maison. I will conduct you thither."

We started,—Count Bismarck and myself, our secretaries following.

The château of la Haute-Maison is a very simple manor-

house, situated on a little wooded hill. It is reached from Montry by a tolerably steep road, soon ending in a copse.

"This place," said Count Bismarck, "seems to be chosen for the exploits of francs-tireurs. It is infested with them, and we hunt them pitilessly. They are not soldiers; we treat them as assassins."

"But," I exclaimed, "they are Frenchmen defending their territory—their homes. They are repelling your invasion; they certainly have a right to do so, and you misunderstand the laws of war in refusing them their application."

"We can only recognise," replied the Count, "soldiers under a regular discipline. The others are beyond the law."

I recalled to him the edicts published in Prussia in 1813, and the crusade preached against the French.

"True," said Count Bismarck; "but the trees upon which your generals hanged our inhabitants still exist to remind us of the fact."

We entered a low hall opening out of a court-yard on a gentle slope. The Count was about to sit down, when he said, "We are in a bad position here. Your francs-tireurs can aim at me through these windows." And as I expressed my astonishment and incredulity, "I beg you," said he, "tell the people of this house that you are a member of the Government, that you command them to watch, and that they will answer with their lives for any criminal attempt."

I went out to do as the Count desired, although well convinced that he had no other design than to make me believe in such attempts in order to justify the barbarous conduct of some of the Prussian officers.

In fact, I was more than reassured of Count Bismarck's safety in seeing around the house numerous Prussian sentries, who had not come there by chance. I re-entered the house as if I had not seen them. We seated ourselves, and the conversation commenced.

I have analysed this conversation, and the account which precedes it, in my report addressed to my colleagues in the Government the 21st of September. It will be found in the Pièces Justificatives.

But, independently of this, I had dictated with a little more

detail my conversation with Count Bismarck. I ask the reader to refer to this document. It is as exact as I could render it. I only take from it a few passages which appeared to me too familiar to be reproduced here.

"My first words to Count Bismarck were these, 'I have thought that before engaging in a definitive struggle under the walls of Paris, it was impossible not to attempt an honourable arrangement, preventing incalculable evils, and I desired to know the intentions of your Excellency on the subject. Our situation, although an extraordinary one, is perfectly well defined. We have not overthrown the Government of the Emperor. It has fallen of itself, and in taking the reins of Government we have only obeyed the law of a supreme necessity. It belongs to the nation to pronounce upon the form of Government which it desires, and upon the conditions of peace. That is why we have convoked it. I have come to ask you if you desire that it shall be interrogated, or if it is on the country you are making war, with the intent of destroying it, or imposing upon it a Government. In this case I must say to your Excellency that we are resolved to defend ourselves to the death. Paris and its forts can resist for three months. On the other side, your country is necessarily suffering by the presence of your armies on our territory. A struggle which should take the character of an extermination would be fatal to both countries, and I believe that with good-will we may prevent it by an honourable peace.'

"The Count replied:—

"'I only ask for peace. It is not Germany which has disturbed it. You declared war without any cause, with the direct intention of taking a portion of our territory. In thus doing, you have been faithful to your past. From the time of Louis XIV. you have not ceased to aggrandize yourself at our expense. We know that you will never give up this policy; that you will only regain your strength to commence a fresh war. Germany has not sought this occasion; she seized it for her own security, and this security can only be guaranteed by a cession of territory. Strasbourg is a constant menace to us. It is the key of our house, and we desire to have it.'

"I replied, 'Then it is Alsace and Lorraine.'

"The Count replied, 'I have not spoken of Lorraine; but as for Alsace, I am very decided. We regard it as absolutely indispensable to our defence.'

"I observed that this sacrifice would inspire France with sentiments of vengeance and hatred, leading by a fatal necessity to another war; that Alsace intends to remain French; that she might be ruled, but not assimilated; that she would become from that moment an embarrassment, and perhaps a source of weakness to Germany.

"The Count did not deny it; but he repeated that, whatever might happen, even if France were generously treated by the conqueror, she would always be plotting war against Germany. She would no more accept the capitulation of Sedan than she had done that of Waterloo and Sadowa. 'All our families are in mourning, our industries have suffered enormous sacrifices, and we do not intend to treat, and then recommence directly.'

"I showed the Count that he omitted two essential elements; firstly, the change effected in manners, then the deliberations in Europe. As to the first of these, he would recognise with me, that the progress of industry, the creation of railroads, the interchange and complication of interests, tended to render war more and more impossible; that the present one was a cruel lesson for France, which she would profit by, and so much the more, as she had been dragged unwillingly into it.

"The Count interrupted me at this word, affirming that, on the contrary, France had desired the war against Germany. He spoke of its old hostility, of the attitude of the press, of the applause of the Corps Législatif, and of the warlike enthusiasm with which the declaration of war had been received.

"I combated each of these assertions. The old hostilities would have disappeared if the two Governments, in turn, had not systematically revived them. The war had been opposed by France in her elections, and even in the plebiscite; it is the exclusive work of the Emperor, and the party which shared the power with him. From this arose the excitement of the press, which was due to them, and the noisy partisanship of the Corps Législatif, the majority of which emanated from him. When once the war was declared, the nation considered itself bound in honour to sustain it, but she has always regarded it with

displeasure. At present there is but one means of pacifying the nation, and of uniting the two countries, that is by renouncing the old policy of conquest and military glory, to adopt that of the union of nations and of liberty; any other policy would prove that Prussia was preparing, not only a territorial spoliation, but a Buonapartist restoration.

"The Count protested strongly. 'What does it matter to us which form of government you are under? If we thought Napoleon more favourable to our interests, we should restore him, but we leave you the choice of your administration. What we desire is our own security, and we cannot have this without the key of the house. This condition is absolute, and I regret not to be able to alter it in any degree.'

"The conversation having taken this turn, I insisted on the grave responsibility which such a resolution placed on one of the two countries. I spoke of the desperate defence of Paris and the provinces. I said that the German armies might remain six months away from their country, and that they would suffer enormous losses; that all considerations of military glory must be sacrificed to the duty of hindering such catastrophes.

"'We have foreseen all this,' said the Count, 'and we prefer undergoing them at once to reserving them for our children. For the rest, our position is less difficult than you suppose. We may be contented with taking a fort, and not one of them can resist more than four days. From this fort we shall dictate law to Paris.'

"I exclaimed against the rigour of a bombardment.

"'Necessity may render it legitimate,' replied the Count; 'besides, I do not say that we shall assault Paris. It may perhaps be more convenient to reduce it by starvation, while we scatter ourselves in the provinces, where no army can stop us. Strasbourg will succumb on Friday; Toul perhaps sooner; the army of M. Bazaine has been reduced to eating mules; it has now come to horses, and soon he will be forced to capitulate. Without investing Paris, we shall hinder the arrival of its stores, with a cavalry of 80,000 men, and we are resigned to remain among you as long as may be needful.'

"'Therefore,' said I, 'it is our destruction that you count upon; for, in order to make peace, you must construct our government. You will be responsible before Europe, which

possibly may think fit not to permit it, and you will prepare for yourself a period of agitation and struggle, of which no one can see the end. I propose a simple means of escaping this difficulty: let us convoke an assembly; you will treat with it, if you are truly politic; you will impose acceptable conditions, and you will insure a solid peace.'

"'For that,' replied he, 'an armistice would be necessary, and I will not have one at any price.'

"'If,' said I, 'you will not allow what is, in my opinion, indispensable to a solution, I draw this inference,—that you mean to profit by your advantage, to force from us what we should not give you if we were in ordinary circumstances. We offer a pecuniary reparation of the evils inflicted on you by the war; but, at present, we cannot go further.'

"It was getting dark. We had more than three leagues to travel to reach the only lodging available, in the midst of a country abandoned and devastated. I asked the Count if, in spite of our opposite views, he could not receive me in the evening at Ferrières. He consented, and, in taking leave of me, he said:—

"'I acknowledge that you have always supported the policy you defend to-day; and if I were sure that it were that of France, I would engage the King to withdraw without touching your territory or demanding an obole. And I know so well his generous sentiments, that I would guarantee you his acceptance. But you represent an imperceptible minority. You have sprung from a popular disturbance, which may overthrow you to-morrow. We have therefore no guarantee. We should have no more in any government which may succeed you. The evil is in the fickleness and irreflective character of your nation; the remedy is in the material pledge which we have the right to take. You would not have scrupled to take from us the banks of the Rhine, although that river is not your natural frontier. We take back what is ours, and we hope thus to insure peace.'

"I replied that, if the conquest of the Rhine borders would have been a violence on our part, that of Alsace had the same character, and could not insure peace."

"The Count persisted in his explanations, and we separated, agreeing to meet again in the evening."

In transcribing this account, I have still before my eyes the incidents of the scene it describes, and, above all, the image of the formidable interlocutor who played the chief part in it, and whom I now accosted for the first time. Although fifty-eight years of age, Count Bismarck appeared in full vigour. His tall figure, his powerful head, his strongly-marked features, gave him an aspect both imposing and severe—tempered, however, by a natural simplicity amounting to good-nature. His manners were courteous and grave, quite free from stiffness or affectation. As soon as the conversation commenced, he displayed a communicativeness and good-will, which he preserved while it lasted. He certainly regarded me as a negotiator quite unworthy of him, but he had the politeness not to let this be seen, and appeared interested by my sincerity. For myself, I was immediately struck with the clearness of his ideas, his rigorous good-sense, and originality of mind. His freedom from all pretension was no less remarkable. I consider him to be an extraordinary political business man; taking account only of what is, occupied with positive and practical solutions, indifferent to everything which does not lead directly to a useful end. Since then I have seen much of him; we have together treated numerous questions of detail, and I have always found him the same. The great power he has causes him no illusion, neither is he haughty; but he is tenacious of it, and does not attempt to hide the sacrifices he makes to preserve it. Convinced of the worth of his talents, he continues to apply them to the work in which he has succeeded so well; and if, to accomplish it, he has to go further than he desires, he resigns himself to do so. For the rest, impressionable and nervous, he is not always master of his impetuosity. I have found in him repulsions and indulgences to me inexplicable. I had heard much of his great ability; he has never disappointed me; he has often wounded me, even revolted me, by his severity and exactions; in everything I have always found him upright and correct.

When I left him at Haute-Maison I had little hope; yet I would not abandon my negotiation without doing all that could be done. I knew I should be listened to with attention; I even went so far as to suppose that Count Bismarck might

not be so inflexible in a second interview. In any case, it was needful for me to reach the village of Ferrières. The country was covered with troops and baggage-vans; it was impossible to pass the night there. We continued our route at sundown; we did not reach Ferrières until eight o'clock, and at nine I went to the château.

We were received in a large drawing-room on the ground floor, called the "Salle de Chasseurs;" the Prussian post was already established there. Registers, stamps, boxes with compartments, all were to be seen, as at Berlin. Everything was done noiselessly, without confusion, each to his own work. The Count was still at table. He came down to invite me to partake of his repast, which I refused; half an hour after, we resumed the conversation of Haute-Maison. I thought, before continuing, that I ought to inform Count Bismarck of the precise character of my mission. "I have come to you," I said, "without credentials; but, as Minister of Foreign Affairs from the Government of the National Defence, and thus the only official representative of the foreign policy of France, I am therefore obliged to render an account to my Government of all I shall hear from you, and even to communicate it to the public, which is our sovereign judge. I therefore shall beg you, when the conversation is finished, to allow me a summary which we may both agree upon, so that there may be no misunderstanding."

"Do not take that trouble," said he; "I give you my entire conversation. I have nothing to hide, and I trust to you for the correctness of the details."

"If such be the case," replied I, "it is necessary for me to return to what we have already said; for I cannot believe that your declarations can have the absolute character which you appeared to give them. I recognise the justness of some of the considerations which you have named, but I think you neglect some very important ones, and that our conclusions may be contrary to our intentions. We agree upon one important point: the necessity and benefit of peace. I consider it ought to be durable; you object that it may be precarious."

"The means of making my opinion triumph is to take from the peace all which might justify yours. Your opinion rests

solely upon the idea you possess of the French character, and of our settled determination of troubling you: its character is both susceptible and generous. Our nation is easily irritated; it is reconciled by amicable conduct. What occasion could be more propitious than the present for a durable attachment, to be secured by treating her now, not as a vanquished foe, but as a natural ally, which has for the moment been dragged into a false way which she now abandons? What more would you have? You have established your preponderance to the detriment of ours; you have acquired, in the eyes of the world, a military glory which might satisfy the most ambitious."

"Do not speak of that," interrupted the Count; "that is a glory without value to us, which is not—" and he hesitated for an expression.

"A mot de bourse," said he.

"Fixed," I said.

"Precisely. It is a value which is not fixed, and to which our nation is but little attached. We only ask to live peaceably. We have never attacked you, and we shall never attack you. As for you, it is quite otherwise; you will only think of revenge, and we shall be obliged to submit to it. It is our interest alone that we consult, and the need of guaranteeing it is so evident that we should be wrong to abandon ourselves to a chimerical hope."

"I will endeavour," I replied, "to confute this opinion, in my eyes altogether erroneous. You seem to confound official and military France with that which results from the scientific and intellectual movement of late years. A profound change has taken place, which you must recognise. The majority of the nation will be necessarily drawn by that irresistible current which conducts her towards a new policy and to higher destinies. She will understand that the support of all nations—especially Germany—is indispensable to her; and she will seek it, not by sterile conquests, but by the benefits of work and interchange; and it may be affirmed that, if this movement be favoured by wise statesmen, war will soon become impossible."

"The question is, to find these wise statesmen," said the Count; "and I am convinced that they do not exist in France. You express noble ideas, and if you were master, I should be

of your opinion, and would treat with you at once; but you are in opposition to the real sentiments of your country, which retains its warlike disposition; and, to speak only of the present, you, as a Government, are born of sedition, and you may be overthrown to-morrow by the populace of Paris."

I interrupted him quickly, to say, "There is no populace in Paris but an intelligent, devoted one. I know that it is impressionable and variable; be assured that its apparent lightness hides a real courage and great generosity. This population has submitted to the Empire, and has only risen when the Empire became no longer possible. Its approbation has imposed on us the duty of defending our soil, and it assists us in maintaining order, which will never be seriously disturbed. As to its peaceful disposition, I guarantee that; and if all France resembled Paris, I should have no difficulty in considering as accepted those ideas which you represent as being those of a minority."

"You reason like a Frenchman," replied the Count; "permit me to remain a German. What is the meaning of the violence of your press—the offensive caricatures—all that mockery and boasting directed against us? They are to flatter the public mind, and thus display its sentiments, which are contrary to your appreciation of them."

"But," said I, "the same thing is going on on the other side of the Rhine; and yet you say, and I believe it, that you do not desire to attack us. You can only see in these manifestations the proof of sentiments which are too active, excited by a few rash men—too well received, perhaps, but only touching the surface. But let us return to our present position, which alone ought to occupy our attention. You have conquered the armies of the Empire: the Empire exists no longer, and the nation asks of you the cessation of a war which has no longer any object. If you refuse this, you will give reason for thinking that it is towards the nation that you bear malice. And, allow me to speak frankly, you are, I believe, only the instrument of the Imperial policy which it is your intention to impose upon us."

"You are quite under a mistake," replied the Count. "I have no reason to like Napoleon III. I do not deny

that it would have been more convenient to have kept him, and you have rendered your country an ill service in overthrowing him: it would certainly have been possible for us to treat with him; but, personally, I have never had cause to be satisfied with him. If he had desired it, we should have been sincere allies, and together we might have managed Europe. He has sought to deceive everybody, and I have never trusted him; but I did not want to fight with him; I proved it in 1867, in the affair of Luxembourg. All who surrounded the King wanted war. I was the only one to oppose it; I even offered to retire, and lost credit. I only tell you this to prove that war was not to my taste; I certainly should never have engaged in it if you had not declared it. And then, I could not believe it. France acted as if it had been pre-arranged. When I knew the quarrel which had arisen on the subject of Prince Hohenzollern's candidature, I became anxious on account of the persistency of your ambassador to treat only with the King. He wearied the King; and knowing this, I advised a policy which might give you satisfaction, and this was followed. When I learned that, according to my advice, the King had obtained from his cousin the withdrawal of the candidature, I wrote to my wife that all was settled, and I was about to join her in the country. Great was my surprise when I found that, on the contrary, all was to begin again. There was therefore, on our part, no systematic hostility. It was the French Government that wanted the war; it took for its pretext the humiliation of having to beg the King's interference. But at this moment I cannot understand such an aberration, such a resolution to be taken by such men as M. de Gramont and M. Ollivier! The former never was more than the most mediocre of diplomatists; Napoleon III. considered him such. As for M. Ollivier, he is an orator, and not a statesman. I have just said that if we had any interest in maintaining Napoleon's dynasty, we should re-establish it; I may say the same as regards the Orleans Princes, and for the Count de Chambord, who would be much more to our taste—above all to that of the King, who naturally holds to his old traditions. As for myself, I am altogether careless of it; I am even republican, and I hold that there is no good government which does not proceed from the

nation itself; only, each must be ruled according to its necessities and its manners.

"We have therefore to consider, above all, what is the interest of nations, and it is that of my own that I consult."

"We agree," said I; "I do the same on my part; only, I want to conciliate, and you to rule, that is to say, to divide. But still, in touching this question of the interest and will of the people, you authorize me to remind you of what I said in our former interview, that we could not seriously treat without the concurrence of the French nation. I will suppose that you obtain definitive advantages. You are here at Paris, conqueror; you will only find the ruins that you have made; there is no Government—I do not say real, but apparent. I do not know your plans, but it seems to me that you will be forced to call the nation together. In Mexico, in order to set Maximilian upon the throne, the Emperor had to submit to this necessity. He created a phantom of representation. If he had called a sincere one, he would have ascertained the will of the country, and spared us great disasters. You expose yourself to the same dangers. I suppose that you act otherwise, that you convoke a real Assembly. Why not do it at once? Permit me to add, that upon this we are necessarily agreed. Our power is essentially provisionary. It does not allow the possibility of a definitive treaty, and beside us there is nothing. Now, you need a contracting party, competent to conclude an obligatory treaty. Let us, then, call the Assembly which we have convoked, thus proving your political disinterestedness and our desire to give you the only surety possible—that of the country. You are placed in the grave situation (which affects all Europe), of either giving us this satisfaction, conformably to our legitimate interest, or, if you refuse it, of revealing publicly such views of conquest as will rouse coalitions against you. The convocation of the Assembly is, then, for you, as for us, the only means of escape from our present difficulties, and of conciliating all interests."

The Count reflected an instant and then said:—

"Perhaps you are right. But that which deters me is the necessity of an armistice, essentially unfavourable to our military operations, and helpful to you. Each day is a gain to you

and a loss to us. If I said a short time since that I would not have an armistice at any price, it was because the military council of the King opposes it, and I am of the same opinion."

"Nevertheless," replied I, "it is not a question of what we would wish, we must not place ourselves in an exclusive position in which no solution is possible. You recognise with me that there is no other power capable of treating with you, except that proceeding from a legal Assembly. You are also aware, that the election and meeting of an Assembly are absolutely impracticable in the state of invasion and war of which France is the subject. It is therefore necessary to make a short truce to military operations, and to allow the inhabitants to deliberate, and this would lead to an armistice for concluding a treaty."

"That may be," said the Count; "but in that case we should have the right to request pledges of you."

"All depends," said I, "on their nature, and on the conditions proposed."

"I have not the power," said the Count, "to discuss this subject, not having the assent of the King, which I reserve. However, I can assure you, now that an armistice would entail the occupation of the Vosges and Strasbourg by our armies, we would leave Metz in her present state. And in speaking of Metz, it is not inappropriate to observe that Bazaine does not belong to you. I have strong reasons for believing that he remains faithful to the Emperor, and therefore would not obey you."

I interrupted him eagerly.

"I think I have still better reasons for believing the contrary. I cannot discuss yours, if you do not divulge them; mine can be easily guessed, when late events are known, as well as the character of the valiant captain who has taken part in them. May I be allowed to ask if M. Bazaine knows of the capitulation of Sedan and the captivity of the Emperor?"

"He is acquainted with these facts," said the Count.

"That is enough," I replied. "If we conclude an armistice, it is clear that I cannot ask, what however I ardently desire, the deliverance of M. Bazaine; but it seems just that we should be allowed a revictualling for a number of days corresponding to the armistice."

"I cannot grant it," said the Count, "nor even the suspension on our side of military operations. Each side will preserve liberty of action. Bazaine might attack us, and we repulse him. As to your Assembly, tell me your ideas on the subject, so that I may think about it and repeat them to the King."

"In my opinion," said I, "Paris ought to be neutralized. You would give, upon our indication, safe-conducts to all the candidates who had to present themselves in the departments, and to all the deputies who might be nominated. I should request for Paris the condition of revictualling which I mentioned for Metz. The armistice seems to me to be required for a fortnight, and I believe that by the end of that time we might, in giving place to the Assembly, put you in communication with a Commission named by it, and invested with a regular power."

"The neutrality of Paris," said the Count, "under such conditions, does not appear to me impossible; only I should ask a guarantee for Paris. But these are points we can treat of better to-morrow, since we must have another interview. I regret to detain you; I will endeavour to do so as little as possible; and if the King were not in bed, I would have at once spoken to him of these difficulties. If you will be here to-morrow at eleven o'clock we will conclude these explanations."

I thanked him, and we separated at about half-past twelve. The next day, Tuesday, 19th September, at eleven A.M. I was at the château. The Count was still with the King; at half-past eleven he sent me word that he was at liberty.

I went upstairs into a large and magnificent room, where he was seated before his bureau. He rose as I entered, and leading me to his bureau showed me a *Journal pour rire*, and another paper, which were not placed there without motives.

"Look," said he, "here is a proof of your peaceful and moderate intentions."

And he held out to me a caricature, representing Prussia as an old person sick and in pain, threatened and mocked at by a Zouave.

"If anything astonishes me," I said, "it is that you can notice for a moment such a futility. Our political men, I speak of the present ones, take no notice of these things. We

are the first victims of the malice and bad taste of the pencil, and we are not affected by it. Those are licenses that we must learn to allow, without being touched by them as statesmen."

"It is a great mistake," said the Count. "With such a license the public mind is allowed to be perverted, and we shall arrive at nothing good if we do not take these things in earnest.—But what do you think of this?" added he, holding me a photograph representing a seaside watering-place. At the bottom I read:—

"'This is a view of Hastings, which I have chosen for my good Louis,' signed 'Eugénie.'"

"I do not see," I said, "what this family souvenir signifies."

"It was," said he, "the passport of a personage who came this morning to confer with me."

"I was right," I replied, "and when yesterday you denied serving the Buonapartist policy, your assertions did not quite harmonize with facts. It is clear that you are made a tool of, and you allow it. This personage has come here for the purpose of obtaining your support, and this conference, whatever it may be, which you do me the honour to announce, shows that you reserve all issues."

"I cannot say yes or no," replied he. "I have explained myself with sufficient frankness. The personage in question asked to see the Emperor. I told him that if the Emperor asked to see him, nothing would be easier. To tell the truth, he is not our prisoner, he is our guest. We ought to guarantee him against all importunities, and to facilitate everything which he considers it proper to do."

"Permit me," said I, "to show you that your language is quite plain, and that I understand its meaning. If the Emperor thinks proper to reclaim the throne, and if he obtains your consent, you will restore him."

"I have told you so," replied he, "but we have come to no decision, and the personage in question not appearing to me of importance, I sent him away."

"Let us leave this subject," replied I, "which does not affect me, and takes us from that on which it is necessary for us to decide. You have consulted the King; I have come to know the result."

"The King," replied the Count, "accepts the armistice on the conditions and with the object determined on by us. As I told you, we demand the occupation of all the besieged fortresses in the Vosges, that of Strasbourg, and the garrison of that place as prisoners of war."

It was with difficulty that I restrained myself, and interrupting him almost impetuously:—

"Count," said I, "I have promised to report to my Government the conversation of your Excellency, omitting nothing; but I do not know if I shall have the strength to repeat what you now say. The garrison of Strasbourg has attracted the admiration of the world by its heroism; to surrender the members of that garrison voluntarily as prisoners of war would be an act of cowardice which no man would counsel."

"I cannot agree with you," replied the Count, "and my reason is a simple one. Strasbourg is exhausted; we have only to make a last assault. I should be very glad to avoid it; but if we do not come to an agreement, on Friday it will certainly be in our hands, and its garrison will belong to us."

"*Certainly*," said I, "is a word very difficult to use in war."

"Add, if you like," said he, "as certain as can be humanly predicted. It is an affair of engineers, and, under this reserve, I am certain not to be mistaken."

"Then," said I, "the garrison would succumb to force. For my part I will never yield it up to you. But let us leave this condition and pass to the others. What does your Excellency understand by the pledge on the part of Paris to which you referred yesterday?"

"Nothing more simple," said he,—"only a fort commanding the city."

"It would be better," I replied, "to cede the entire city. It would be more clear and radical. How can you admit that a French Assembly can deliberate under Prussian cannon? That again is a condition which I will not take on myself to make known to the Government."

"Let us endeavour to make an arrangement, then," said the Count.

I said, "If we must give up neutralizing Paris, the Assembly might meet at Tours, where the Government was already."

"I accept it," replied he; "and in this case it would remain agreed, according to what was said yesterday, that we should impartially facilitate the electoral meetings and votes, even in the occupied departments, except in Alsace and Lorraine, which we hold."

"It cannot be more certain," said I, "that you have the feeling of the populations against you. You thus avow, that if they were allowed to vote, they would be unanimous in repulsing you."

"I know it perfectly well," said he. "We shall not do them a pleasure, nor ourselves either; it will be for us a painful duty. It is necessary to the security of Germany, and to the success of the war that you will not fail to bring about in the future. We do not therefore include them among the electors you will consult, since we intend to govern them exclusively. But if you will allow me, I will submit to the King this new idea, with which he is unacquainted; at the same time, I will speak to him of your repugnance to the surrender of Strasbourg."

The Count left the room; and, being alone, I was ready to give vent to the violent feelings which agitated me. My patience was nearly exhausted, and I felt I still had need of it. I paced the rich apartment I occupied. The beauty of the country spread out before me seemed to render more exquisite the suffering I endured. The park, shaded by trees artistically arranged, the tranquil water, the grass, the flowers,—all these were so many mockeries of the misery of this country, given over to inflexible and materialistic invaders. Being unable to bear this contrast, I seated myself before one of the tables in the room, and the idea presented itself to me of procuring an undeniable witness to the incredible propositions which had just been made. I had no paper at hand. Upon the blank page of a letter which I drew from my pocket, I wrote the substance of these conditions, which made me blush. I waited about twenty minutes, irritated but not agitated, knowing full well what must be the issue.

The Count returned with a paper in his hand, and he read me the text, translating it; but he would not leave it with me. Before he read me this, I had told him that I had, on my part

written down the conditions which he had just submitted to the King. With regard to the security for Paris, I had used this formula,—one of the forts surrounding the city.

"It is not that," observed the Count. "I did not say one fort. I may demand several. I particularly stipulate that it commands the enceinte, as, for example, Mont Valérien."

I remained silent, and he added, "The King accepts the arrangement for convening the Assembly at Tours, but he insists upon the garrison of Strasbourg being surrendered prisoners of war."

This was the end. My part was played, and my strength abandoned me. I rose suddenly. A mist obscured my vision. I leaned my aching head against the door, and restrained my tears. It was the work of a moment, and, turning round, "Forgive," I said to the Count, "this momentary weakness. I am ashamed to have shown it, but my sufferings are such that I may be excused. I beg your permission to withdraw. I was mistaken in coming here, but I do not repent it. I obeyed a sentiment of duty, and nothing less than this imperious necessity could enable me to support the tortures thus imposed upon me. I will faithfully report to my Government the details of our interviews. Personally, I thank you for the condescension you have shown; I shall not forget it. If my Government considers that anything can be done in the interest of peace under the conditions you impose, I will overcome my repulsion, and return here to-morrow. If they decide on the contrary course, I shall have the honour of writing to you. I am very unhappy, but not without hope."

The Count appeared to me slightly agitated; he held out his hand to me, addressing me politely, and, my heart swelling with pain and rage, I descended the large staircase of the château.

It was two o'clock when we left Ferrières, accompanied by a captain and major appointed to conduct us to the outposts, and to await there either my return or my negative reply. Arriving near Joinville le Pont, a lively fusillade obliged us to retrace our steps, and return by Creteil. The Prussian officer had the express command not to pass the end of the village,

the King having decided that no one should present himself before our lines, under the pretext that our Metz guards had fired on a German who had come to parley. We were told that our soldiers would receive us with gun-shots. We advanced, showing the white flag, and this signal was respected. The sun was going down when we entered the city by Fort Charenton.

During the journey my mind was a prey to the most painful perplexities. The silence we maintained left me entirely to my own reflections. Going over the impressions of these three fatal days, I tried to look clearly at our cruel situation, and to fix upon the resolution that I must submit to my colleagues. I had been struck by the number and order of the German troops. The desire of peace was general; the officers expressed it aloud, and yet it was easy to see, by the aspect of these men, that they were sustained by confidence and discipline, and that each would do his duty. I compared, in spite of myself, this army with the débris of our own, and I could not help feeling the most serious fears. I had, too, the heartrending spectacle of our ravaged country constantly before my eyes, and in my ears the menacing words of Count Bismarck,—that his troops could scatter themselves throughout all France without meeting any obstacle, and that it would be given up to plunder. I knew that we could oppose to them nothing but recruits taken from the plough, badly armed, without military discipline, and I anxiously asked myself if it was not temerity to continue the struggle under conditions so unequal. On the other hand, when I thought of the conditions required by Prussia, they seemed to me altogether unacceptable. The pitiless severity with which Count Bismarck had spoken of our mutilation revolted me: What was the good of consulting an Assembly upon the dismemberment of the country? how, above all, could we consent as a preliminary to the occupation of Strasbourg? how could its brave garrison be delivered up to the enemy? This last rigour only seemed a useless humiliation. To submit to it appeared a disgrace. But perhaps we might hope that in broaching a regular negotiation, we might bring our adversary to diminish his pretensions. I had only spoken personally. As the bearer of full power from the

Government, I should have more authority, and, in any case, I should have the advantage of unveiling yet more the evil designs of Prussia. In spite of all the torture just inflicted upon me, I was ready, if my colleagues thought it right, to repeat that sad pilgrimage on the morrow.

Hardly had I crossed the wall of the enceinte, when I understood that this expedient, however desirable it might be, was impossible. The excitement in Paris was extreme. Everywhere were to be seen National Guards under arms and exercising. I could see in this zealous activity an enthusiastic confidence altogether incompatible with that spirit of resignation which was required for a negotiation with the enemy. This impression increased as I advanced into the city; it acquired a decisive force when, at nine o'clock, I went to the Hôtel de Ville.

That very day we had met with a defeat; in spite of our efforts, the heights of Chatillon had been taken. Four regiments composed of young soldiers had fled in a panic. If the Prussians had been bold, they might have pursued them to the foot of the ramparts. This event had excited my colleagues, who, besides, had showed great discontent on learning my departure, which had been imprudently made known. They evinced towards me great coldness. It was said in the room next to the Council Chamber that I was to be disowned. At midnight, after settling business, General Trochu accorded me an interview. I gave an account of what I had done. The feeling of irritation produced by this account was unanimous; I felt it increase at the recital of each detail. My auditors could contain themselves no longer when they heard the conditions under which Prussia would accord an armistice. All exclaimed energetically against the supposition that a negotiation would be listened to upon such a basis. I shared their opinion. I was appointed to make it known to Count Bismarck, to whom I wrote the following letter:—

"To Count Bismarck.

"SIR,—I have faithfully stated to my colleagues in the Government of the National Defence the declaration which your Excellency made to me. I regret to make known to your

Excellency that the Government is unable to admit your propositions. It would accept an armistice whose object should be the election and meeting of a National Assembly. But it cannot subscribe to the conditions on which your Excellency makes it depend. As for myself, I have the consciousness of having done my utmost to put an end to the shedding of blood, and to effect a peace, which would be a great benefit to our two nations. I only stop before the imperious duty which commands me not to sacrifice the honour of my country, which is determined to resist energetically. I unite unreservedly in its desire, together with all my colleagues. God, who judges us, will decide our fate: I have faith in His justice.—Yours, etc.,

"JULES FAVRE."

Now the decree is pronounced. We have succumbed, and yet I do not think an impartial judge can condemn us.

Doubtless, in face of the fatal treaty which forces from us Strasbourg and Metz, a real firmness of mind is needed not to regret the issue which was offered to us. But the least reflection will show that it was impracticable, and that that territorial sacrifice was already predetermined on, which has been since imposed on us, after having been forced on the Chancellor himself by German public opinion, which it was impossible to resist.

Such was in fact, from the commencement, the real obstacle to a successful negotiation; and when Count Bismarck said that the King would have renounced all conquest if the French Government and character would guarantee our sincere desire of preserving peace, he was mistaken. The King could not have done it. Germany, intoxicated with her victories, loudly claimed the price of them. Her journalists, her literary men, her poets, had continually repeated that Alsace and Lorraine belonged originally to Germany, and ought to be restored to her; she intended to have them. In vain did some truly enlightened men protest; in vain did M. Simon de Trèves address a proclamation in which he showed the interest of Germany to lie in leaving France unmutilated;[1] an imperious desire possessed all minds, and the Government which opposed it would have been overthrown.

[1] See Pièces Justificatives.

On the other side, our position was exactly the same. The principle of the integrity of territory could not have been discussed, and any concession, however indirect, on this point, would have deeply wounded public feeling, and provoked formidable discontent. If there were any doubt on this point, it would be dispelled by the tone of the press at this time, and above all by the immense impression which the report of my interview at Ferrières produced in France and Europe. My conduct did not meet with a single criticism, and among those who approved of it, many gave their opinion in exaggerated terms. I have in my possession a number of letters addressed to me on this occasion. I cannot quote one of them, so flattering are they; they proceeded from all ranks of society—the clergy, the magistracy, from literary men, political men, and from the bar. It was easy to see that I had interpreted the national thought; that, like myself, those of my fellow-citizens who desired peace, would not buy it with sacrifices which we hoped to avoid; with me, they believed in the sacred duty of combating to the last the insolent pretension of the invader, who refused our offer of reparation, in order to force from us two provinces, in spite of the will of the inhabitants, who energetically repelled the idea of separation from France.

The interest was no less intense among other nations, and on every hand our agents informed us that the unheard-of requirements of Prussia had brought about a reaction favourable to France. The greater part of the Governments had thought that peace might be made by paying an indemnity; nearly all had pronounced against the conquest of any part of our territory. The maximum of concessions to be imposed seemed to be the dismantlement of our fortresses of the Vosges and of Alsace. Thus all were surprised at the conditions formulated by Prussia, and discontented with them.

M. de Chaudordy telegraphed to me from Tours, on the 23d September:—"Your detailed report has not reached us. We have had the summary of it, which was immediately transmitted to all parts of France and Europe. The impression is everywhere the same, viz., in France, enthusiasm and excitement for war; in other countries, blame of the Prussian pretensions, and complete approval of our firm confidence that Europe will only

admit as possible, at the very most, the demolition of the fortresses, with a pecuniary indemnity. I have taken advantage of this position to call the attention of the ambassadors, and chiefly of England, to the utility of at least a moral concurrence, such as the official recognition by their country of the Government of the National Defence. They all seemed favourable to this idea, and have already supported it in writing to their Cabinets.

"I wrote, in my turn, in this sense, to our ambassadors, showing the unanimity of Paris, the obedience of all France, and the order reigning there. All your instructions received last night have been promptly executed, and sent to our agents. M. Thiers is to-day at St. Petersburg; he has received from M. the Count de Beust the assurance that if Russia take the lead, Austria will follow."

"*September 24th.*

"The Russian journals are extremely favourable to us; those of Vienna are very violent against Prussia. Lord Lyons has just told me that the same change in our favour is taking place in England, and that the *Times* itself begins to go in this direction. The relations with all the diplomatic leaders now at Tours are perfect. They will follow the Government wherever it thinks fit to go. I have informed them that the conditions of peace and of an armistice given forth by Count Bismarck (when the new Government, which was not responsible for the war, had done its utmost to obtain peace) changed all the conditions of the struggle, and gave to it a legitimacy which it had not at the outset. They all say that, in fact, the position of parties is changed, and that Prussia has henceforth become alone responsible for all the evil: this is what they are about to write to their Governments.

"M. Tachard (our Minister in Brussels) telegraphs that M. Darcy, correspondent of the *Standard*, affirms that Lord Granville declared to him, the day before yesterday, that the dismantling of Metz and Strasbourg would alone be admitted by England."

"*The 27th of September.*

"Your circumstantiated report has at length arrived through the *Journal Officiel*. I send it, signed, to all our agents. Your conduct, already known, obtains the approbation of all Europe.

The details certainly will only serve to render opinion yet more favourable to us. Count Bismarck seems to have understood this, for he has addressed a despatch to the Prussian agents, from which the Minister of Italy has read me the following extract: 'Count Bismarck has confined himself to demanding, as a condition of an armistice, the occupation of Toul, Strasbourg, and Verdun by Prussian troops. It has never been a question of Mont Valérien. The object of these demands was to provide more easily for the provisioning of the Prussian army during the armistice. I take this opportunity of saying to the ambassadors, that if there were any contradiction to this, it was for the great States of Europe to request Count Bismarck to explain himself, and to state the conditions of the armistice.' I insisted that at this juncture they should make themselves heard, and I stated all possible reasons, supported by your instructions. Lord Lyons has sent a second courier to renew his request. The Prince de Metternich, as well as M. Nigra, and all the rest, show themselves zealous in this cause."

Unhappily the two great powers whose action was indispensable to the efficacy of any intervention by the neutrals, were determined to do nothing, or rather, they leaned to the side of Prussia, and advised us to submit to the cession of territory.

The communications which I received from St. Petersburg could leave me in no doubt concerning Russia. She desired, above all, that the war should cease; this was for her the principal thing. With this object she had interposed, and was ready to do so again. She had just rendered us the service of making Count Bismarck admit the possibility of treating with the Government of the National Defence. But if she desired to see this disastrous struggle come to an end, she thought much less of the means than the end.

The true reason for this attitude was, that no one believed in the energy, or even the possibility, of our resistance. The Prussian army inspired some with admiration, and the greater number with fear. Thus they advised us earnestly to give consent to an armistice. Nevertheless, they did not leave us in ignorance that the Emperor Alexander would never consent to promise, even conditionally, an armed demonstration against Prussia. We were assured of his good-will, and his intention

of being serviceable to us. But he would bind himself to nothing, not even to making any attempts at the head-quarters; and we were told that England, on her part, would do nothing, if Russia did not unite with her. Our representative in the Cabinet of St. Petersburg replied that we were ready to accept an armistice, provided it were not accompanied by humiliating conditions. He represented the interest which Russia had in assuring to us a lasting peace. He added that it would perhaps be hurtful to Russia to be forestalled in this step by other powers. But, in spite of his talent and zeal, he was met continually by the insurmountable obstacle of an engagement of honour which bound the Sovereign, and thus marked out the line of policy from which his Ministers could not swerve.

This was, in fact, the objection behind which Prince Gortschakoff constantly entrenched himself. It had the advantage of substituting for discussion the respect he owed to his master, and confidence in his good intentions. The Prince could not have disputed that there was in his country, and in the Court, a deep sympathy with France. He was far from forgetting this. I am even convinced that it was not without a natural anxiety that he saw the violent transformation of which our misfortunes were the prelude. It is thus that I explain his desire—certainly a sincere one—for the prompt cessation of hostilities. And yet, except the obliging acts of the Emperor, he offered us nothing but counsels of resignation, in which duty forbade us to acquiesce. Such was afterwards his language to M. Thiers. It is true, he gave his concurrence to the proposition for the armistice; but when this proposition was rendered impossible by an exaction of Prussia, which was contrary to international rights, the Cabinet of St. Petersburg no longer supported the project, and returned to the absolute non-interference upon which she had at first determined.

From these considerations, and from the correspondence of Lord Granville with Lord Lyons, published in the Blue-Book, it appears clear that Russia and England (justly preoccupied with the continuation of a war which was prejudicial to the whole of Europe, having, with regard to France, such sentiments as were rendered almost sympathetic by its misfortunes and the fall of the Empire) would have desired to serve us,

but without in any way compromising themselves, or preventing the concurrence of the other powers. I do not undervalue either this good intention, or the kind acts which have resulted therefrom, of which I retain, in the name of my country, a grateful remembrance, as well as of the very decided sentiments of Italy, Spain, Austria, and Turkey. They have neither saved nor helped us; in this, I think, they lacked political foresight; but I cannot be insensible to their attitude towards us: in those cruel junctures, it was full of cordiality. My friend M. Senard, who accepted a special mission to Florence, met with the kindest reception from the King, Victor Emanuel. The Italian Cabinet joined us in our efforts to obtain a collective action. The Spanish ambassador, M. Olozaga, whose noble and generous mind has long perceived the utility of a close union between our two countries, would have lent us a ready and efficient support. Many times he proposed to go to the Prussian head-quarters; but all were held back by the calculated reservation of the two powers who were really the umpires in the case, and who, although wishing us well, and considering the pretensions of Prussia dangerous for the future of Europe, have allowed events to take place which they might and ought to have prevented.

In fact, it was not simply a question of French interest, the stability of Europe and the respect for justice were at stake. The State leaders, who have closed their eyes to this, will have to repent of it sooner or later; as they may already have repented of their indifference to that act of force of which Denmark was the victim, in spite of the treaties which protected it. I leave out of the question the threatening consequences, for each nation, which will be inevitably produced by a preponderance of power on the side of Prussia. I reduce the question to the simple maintenance of peace, which ought to be the care of all politicians, since it is the first interest of peoples. Regarded from this point of view, the exactions of Prussia ought to have been the object of formal disapproval from the powers of Europe, and to have decided their united action.

To prove this, I bring forward a witness, who cannot be

doubted, M. Bismarck himself. What is the argument he has continually used as an excuse for a conquest, whose violence and iniquity he has never attempted to conceal? This argument is, to tell the truth, the only one he produced at Sedan, at Ferrières, at Versailles, and in all public documents. "France," he says, "will never forgive us for her disasters. The desire to avenge them will be the soul of her policy, and will urge her to a furious war against us. The merest good sense makes it our duty to prepare for it; the best means of insuring its chances to ourselves is to take those impregnable fortresses, and to enfeeble our enemies by diminishing their territory."

I will not here repeat what I replied to this reasoning, either in my conversation with the Chancellor or in my despatches. It is this which explains what I said above of Count Bismarck and his policy. I do not believe that he has been free to follow his own convictions; he has yielded to views inferior to his own. I do not know what will be the judgment of history on this controvertible point; if my presentiments are correct, it will blame him for sacrificing the future to the present, for having rendered justice subordinate to force, and lost the opportunity of rendering a great service to his country, and of acquiring great glory. When a nation has been humiliated, it must either be raised again by magnanimity, or completely destroyed. It is an error to suppose that it is smitten powerless by mutilation—far from that; it is fortified by giving it the prestige of devotion to a just cause. The Prussian statesmen are so much the more inexcusable for not having understood this, in that they only had to consult their own annals. They have acted toward us as Napoleon did towards them in 1807; let them inquire of their fathers, and they will guess the future which they have prepared.

In fact, they know this, and it is perhaps the first time that statesmen, in signing a treaty of peace, interline it with a declaration of war at its expiration. They were the stronger—this explains all; yet they were not so strong as united Europe, and we have reason to be astonished that the latter assisted them by the complicity of her silence. Those Ministers who acquiesced in the treaty will not escape, whatever be their genius, from the accusation of having preferred their own re-

pose to the security of their children. They preferred allowing the storm to gather, which will break out after they are gone, to taking a firm resolve, which would have cost them the trouble of an effort of will. Moreover, it seems to me that it would have been easy for them to preserve succeeding generations from the too probable misfortunes to which they are exposed by this neglect. They had not to preoccupy themselves either with Prussia or France, but with Europe and humanity. As the chief representatives of those wide principles which preside over men, ruling their fatal and changeful rivalries, they ought to have said to Prussia: "That ambition which prompts you to take possession of two provinces, in spite of the will of their inhabitants, is unjust and dangerous; it condemns you to new and inevitable struggles, which will be a cause of disturbance and suffering for our descendants, and perhaps for ourselves; we are opposed to such a course." They ought to have said to France: "You provoked the war; your chastisement is just; you shall repair, within the limits of possibility, the evils you have caused; you shall renounce all ulterior idea of revenge and conquest; and if you break the solemn engagements you are about to make, our collective action will constrain you to respect it."

If the statesmen of Europe had taken this tone, if they had formed this holy league against mutual violence, they would have been the benefactors of the nations. They would have proclaimed that law of solidarity which ought to unite them, and which is for each of them the only guarantee of order and prosperity. They found it more convenient to abstain. Was this the safest plan? Is there not a time when weakness prepares cataclysms? And do not those clever politicians, who have employed all their wisdom in not conceiving any plan, cast an anxious look upon the certain issue of these catastrophes? Have they measured how far Prussia will go when aided by the weakness of those whom she does not attack? Have they any idea of what is going on in the midst of modern societies, and of the formidable growth of the seeds sown by ignorance and passion? In such junctures, to permit combustible matter to approach and touch is to accept beforehand the responsibility of the disaster.

This truth will appear only too clearly from facts, as time

shall elucidate them. We have sought in vain to make it evident; we have met with indifference from those who were most interested in taking it for their guide. Our importunity wearied them; they found it the easiest plan to take leave of us, whilst repeating, coldly: "You are smitten by fate, act with a good grace; it is your affair; we prove our friendship by not interfering."

If I am not much mistaken, it will not be a small honour to France not to have yielded to these counsels. She did not doubt either her rights or herself. She has struggled until she is exhausted; and it is one consolation in her misfortune that she has yielded nothing, except to force. She knew at Ferrières that she had no alternative but an abandonment of territory, or the continuation of a war, about whose issue there could be no doubt; and she chose war, with all the miseries it entails. I remain convinced that, in so doing, she has nobly done her duty.

Nevertheless, might it not be thought that, in submitting to the conditions of the armistice, the Government would have determined the intervention of the other powers, and that these would have limited the pretensions of Prussia?

No one can say what might have happened with an armistice and the convocation of an Assembly. I have proved by my actions with what earnestness I desired both. The necessity of renouncing them caused me great disappointment; but it was no exaggerated feeling of susceptibility which dictated this grave determination; we bowed to a necessity forced on us by the insolent exactions of Prussia; it is to her alone that the failure of these negotiations must be attributed, whose success I should so much have valued.

Thus I am tempted to believe that Prussia desired and prepared this result. In our first conversation at La Haute-Maison, Count Bismarck rejected every proposition of an armistice. "The Council of the Generals," said he, "considered it contrary to the interest of the army, whose operations he intended to hasten forward." It was probably from respect for England and Russia that, in our second interview at Ferrières, he consented to consult the King. But in reporting the decision of

his Sovereign, he stipulated the conditions above mentioned, which our mutual situation did not seem in any way to justify.

In fact, the question was placed before us very simply. If I could have assembled the electors, and convoked the Assembly with the enemy's concurrence, I should have spared myself the pain of going to consult with him among our devastated departments; but I was obliged to obtain from him the power of interrogating the nation, and of constituting, by its free sovereignty, a regular government, with which to treat. This was to ask him if he intended to determine our fate by a convention, or by an act of force. To refuse an armistice, or render it unacceptable, was to hinder the meeting of the Assembly, and to subject us to the law of arms.

Such was the desire of the military party. Count Bismarck placed himself in its ranks.

What was the use of exacting guarantees and imposing humiliations upon us? What was the use of wounding us to the heart, by forcing us to stipulate the captivity of our soldiers?

The strategical position of Prussia was impregnable. Mistress of the route to Paris, free to spread her soldiers east and west—having nothing to fear from ours, since she held the last of them blockaded under the walls of Metz—she might, without danger, even without inconvenience, have been indulgent on the conditions of an armistice which would have given France an opportunity of expressing her will. Prussia did precisely the opposite; she wanted to treat us as vanquished. She did not even respect the courage displayed by the defenders of Strasbourg; and, substituting a material calculation for an elevated sentiment, she would not leave those free whom she hoped to take in a few days. This needless severity made negotiation impossible; the Government rejected it without discussion. What would have happened if it had been admitted? Imagine the impression produced on the Paris population by the announcement of a treaty of armistice giving up Strasbourg and its garrison! The Government that signed it would not have existed twenty-four hours, and the fatal divisions which must have followed its fall would have rendered all defence impossible.

As for the intervention of Europe, which certain Ministers, and chiefly Lord Granville, led us to hope for as the price of our submission to the conqueror's will, I regard it as a pure chimera. They have excused themselves on the ground of the resolution we took; and if we had yielded, they would have found another pretext. The truth is that we were systematically abandoned, and that not a step has been taken to stay the ambition of Prussia. She has been allowed to disturb the balance of power in Europe; and, in the nineteenth century, she has caused the brutal principle of conquest to prevail. The future will show what profit she has gained by this materialistic policy. France submits to it, but is not overwhelmed by it. She retains her courage and her faith; and, however great may be her misfortune, she does not believe it to be irreparable. We may always hope the tide of fortune will turn in our favour when we do not voluntarily court its disfavour.

CHAPTER V.

INTERIOR ORGANIZATION OF THE GOVERNMENT— A DELEGATION SENT TO TOURS.

I AM obliged to go back a little to relate the acts of the Government of the National Defence during the fourteen days preceding the complete investment of Paris. It was, in fact, during this short delay that it had to take all the measures indispensable to putting the capital in a state of defence, and at the same time to provide for political necessities and those connected with the administration and finance, entailed by the terrible crisis we were about to commence.

The day following the 4th of September, Paris presented a spectacle of indescribable confusion. The most violent and contradictory feelings agitated every mind: rage, fear, enthusiasm, joy, the desire of combat, and the hope of conquering; workshops were deserted, soldiers and Gardes-Mobile mingled with the population, and gave way to incessant patriotic manifestations. It was necessary to establish order and calm in the midst of this crowd, so profoundly stirred—to assemble the military part of the population round their standard, to call all the citizens to severe and earnest duty in the face of danger. Nothing was possible without the union of all for the same end. The Government was convinced of this necessity, and did all in its power to supply it.

Moreover, during these first days it would have been difficult to discover the germ of any serious division. All party spirit seemed forgotten by those who had lost the supreme power, as well as those who had taken possession of it. The deputies of the Opposition and Centre showed themselves in large num-

bers at the Hôtel de Ville, and offered their concurrence with entire disinterestedness. For one moment the question was raised, of a protest, prepared by the members of the majority; they had the wisdom not to persist. As for public functionaries, they felt they were in the face of a call to arms against the enemy, and not of a revolution; they no more dreamed of quitting their posts than the Government of depriving them of those posts. A movement which has no adversaries is necessarily moderate: that of the 4th September was so for another reason. Being the result of the outburst of public indignation against the incapacity of the man who had exposed us to invasion, it could fulfil its mission only by the help of all; it had therefore to aim at rallying all around itself, and not to exclude any.

Nevertheless, it was impossible for it to forget the circumstances under which it had been formed, or the men who composed it. The name it had taken characterized exactly its nature and mission. It did not suffice for the Parisian population, which required a more precise formula and a more brilliant sign. Where should these be found outside the republican institutions?

If, when I am writing—now that the war against Prussia has ceased, now that sedition has been put down, now that the organized forces which sustain the nation's life are in full play—it is impossible to conceive of any Government but that of a Republic which would be acceptable even to those who disliked it the most, how, in the midst of the confusion, on the eve of the most formidable trials, when all personal ambition had to be annihilated in a common devotion to the country, how could we do otherwise than take for a lever the sublime idea of freedom and power which the word Republic expresses? The Government would have committed a great fault in hesitating. It was obliged resolutely to bar the passage to all pretensions, direct or indirect, calculated or involuntary. This is what I thought it right to reply, even before conferring with my colleagues, to the request addressed to me in the name of the Orleans Princes by one of their most faithful and honourable friends. They desired that some post might be assigned to them in the defence, even the most

dangerous. I charged their representative to express to them my gratitude for their offer, but at the same time my regret at being obliged to refuse it. I felt how severe was this decision; on their side they would recognise its absolute necessity. I believed they had anticipated it, for I was informed, in their name, that if the Government saw any serious objection to their presence in France, they would at once betake themselves to exile. We could expect nothing less from the patriotic abnegation of those Princes who, in 1848, had already gained public esteem by their noble disinterestedness. "I hope," said I to my interlocutor, "that this sacrifice will be only temporary. The Republic only imposes it on account of the danger of the country; when this has disappeared, she will be glad to open her arms to those who, in the days of her misfortune, placed their sword at her service."

The Government was of my opinion, and that evening the Princes left the city.

The policy which dictated this measure was not that of a party, it was that of the defence, as defined in a few lines of our proclamation to the army:—

"In accepting the power in the formidable crisis we are passing through, we are not doing the work of a party.

"Our end is not power, but combat.

"We are not the Government of a party; we are the Government of the National Defence.

"We have but one object, one will: the salvation of the country by the army, and the nation united around the glorious symbol which made Europe recoil eighty years ago.

"Now, as then, the name Republic means close union of army and people for the defence of the country."

And yet it was impossible that, while governing in the name of the Republic, we should not apply its formulas and principles, and that, other things being equal, we should not prefer for public offices those who professed Republican opinions. The reproaches which have often been addressed to the Minister of the Interior do not seem to me to be just. He was no doubt often mistaken in his choice—who would not have been?—but he was chiefly ruled by the desire of raising the nation; he wanted to communicate to it his patriotic ardour, and for that

purpose a recourse to Bonapartists would certainly have been unwise.

Thus, when twenty provisionary mayors had to be appointed for the administration in Paris until the regular municipal election, the Minister and Mayor, M. Etienne Arago, sought those among the citizens who appeared most worthy, and able to exercise in their districts the most salutary influence. Those claimed by public opinion, and who had the most power, were tried Republicans, and no one had any reason to be astonished or to complain. I do not say that they have been, without exception, all that could have been desired, but I assert that no one can truly appreciate the services which they have rendered, the fatigues, the dangers to which they were exposed, and the injustice with which they have been repaid. The fatality of events invested them with a power without limit. They needed extraordinary strength not to commit all those faults to which such a power seemed to condemn them; they have avoided many. Absorbed night and day in a labour without respite, having daily to feed famishing crowds, obliged to console them, to strengthen them, to restrain them, having to struggle against misery, cold, bombardment, and insurrection; succumbing under the multiplicity of diverse duties which fell to their share through the dissolution of legal authority and the distrust of popular passions, they certainly had the heaviest burden to bear which could be conceived of, and they have many times prevented tumult and insurrection. I have seen them at work; I had the honour to be their superior in rank; I have often differed from them in opinion, and have often opposed them; I always admired their devotion, and I should be lacking in conscientiousness if I did not do them justice.

At the time when they were appointed, all was yet uncertainty and experiment with regard to the defence. Many excellent citizens thought it impossible, and spread around disquietude and hesitation. It was at the mayoralties that confidence revived. Seeing the example of activity given by the municipal officers, each gained fresh courage, and wanted to do his duty. They gathered together all the assistance possible, made ambulances, distributed arms. The patriotic spirit increased daily. At the end of some days Paris was trans-

formed; and the firmest pessimist began to believe that, in spite of her frivolity, this queen of pleasures might well astonish the world by her heroism.

The armament and organization of the National Guard was one of the first operations to be accomplished quickly and well; now, in virtue of its very principle, this was thrown into confusion by an excess of haste and zeal. It was in the terms of the law of 1851 that, upon my proposition, the Corps Législatif had voted its establishment. But the ardour of the citizens to enrol themselves had been such that no legal verification had been enforced either of domicile or nationality. One may readily conceive of the disorder produced by such laxness: foreigners, children, old men, vagabonds, criminals, had received arms and figured on the lists. The elections bore testimony to the result of the confusion in a way to be regretted. There was no time to stop at these details; the enemy was advancing; it was necessary at any price to set on foot some regiments to guard the ramparts. Of 360,000 enrolled, two-thirds were neither clothed nor equipped. The mayoralty of Paris, and those of the arrondissements, did marvels, and provided for everything in a few weeks. During this time the Minister of War armed the Gardes-Mobiles, the Minister of the Interior prepared their uniforms. Those people of the departments who came heroically to shut themselves up with us to share our fate, were sheltered in our families, and all disputed the honour of receiving them.

It was with no less solicitude that the administration of the war and the Governor of Paris occupied themselves with the armament of the forts and ramparts. There, everything had to be done, and the carelessness of the Imperial Government had compromised our security to the utmost. This unpardonable fault had to be repaired in a few days. Since then it has been so completely. Thanks to the skilled labour of genius, directed by the care of the Council of Defence, Paris had become impregnable; it was already formidable at the time of the investment; and if, as he threatened, the besieger had attempted a sudden blow, he would probably have encountered a formidable resistance, although improvised in a week.

In thus accepting the perils and sufferings of a siege, Paris,

in spite of her resolution, was not exempt from apprehension upon the question of provisioning. This was, in fact, one of the most grave, the most difficult of all the questions raised by these extraordinary events. To keep alive a population of more than 2,000,000 in a fortified place, having no communication with the outside world, was a difficult problem, whose solution only lay in immense resources. The Minister of the 9th of August had accumulated considerable stores. Until the latest hour of free entrance the Minister of the 4th of September had not ceased to add to them: on the 8th he inserted the following notice in the *Journal Officiel*, which proves that no one thought then that the Prussian army would prolong its operations into the winter:—

"The Government of the National Defence hastens to inform the inhabitants of Paris, that the supply of bread, meat, and all other provision, is abundantly sufficient for the nourishment of a population of 2,000,000 during two months."

These two months in perspective appeared to us two centuries, and no one expected to have to pass them; and yet we have endured four and a half, with what sufferings, what industry, what desperate tenacity, I shall describe further on. When, having exhausted our last sack of flour, we treated in order to save our fellow-citizens from a horrible death, stung by patriotic pain, they accused us of precipitation; now, coolness has returned, let them remember that on the 8th of September we only promised two months' food, and then let them judge!

These multiplied cares, the oversight of all kinds of details which accompanied them, required from us assiduous labour, which only allowed of our meeting in the evening at nine o'clock. The sitting was never ended until after midnight, and generally was prolonged until two and three o'clock in the morning. From the 4th of September until the 12th of February we did not once miss this duty, and we often had supplementary meetings during the day. In spite of his labours and fatigues, General Trochu always presided at the sittings, except on the days of battle; he was ignorant of nothing, and he often astonished us by the justness and force of his observations upon subjects which appeared not to enter into his province.

Besides this, he had from the first gained over all his colleagues an influence well explained by his exceptional position and his acknowledged superiority of mind. His position as Governor of Paris and military chief would have insured him the principal part, even if he had not been called to it as President of the Government. Since then some have thought that it would have been wiser to divide these different posts, by distinguishing the executive power from the commanding power. But at that time, far from being struck by this difficulty, we gave ourselves up unreservedly to the sympathies and confidence which possessed all Paris. Then, too, the General seemed to justify it. I can easily understand that certain men, otherwise very respectable, accustomed to place the rules of military discipline above civic duty, should have criticised his conduct on the 4th of September; for myself, I have but one reproach against him, which is, that he has excused himself by reference to extenuating circumstances. In coming to the Hôtel de Ville to take the Presidency of the Government which was there installed, General Trochu performed the part of a great man. It had not been possible for him to prevent the fall of the Empire; if, like others, he had been eclipsed behind its débris, he would have been responsible for the uncertainties of the army, which perhaps would have been divided. In placing himself at its head to lead it against the enemy, he saved the situation, and rendered an immense service to his country; he only compromised himself and his professional position; for if by an unlooked-for return the Regent had again seized the reins of Government, he would have borne the heaviest responsibility. His sacrifice was therefore greater than ours, and as he was as free as ourselves from all personal ambition, he will have deserved, whatever may happen, the gratitude of his country; sooner or later she will render him the justice due to him.

The country at that time did not deny it to him; his popularity was incontestable, and necessarily reacted on the situation which he had taken among us. But in reality he had no need of this to attract us: his person sufficed. From the first day he proved himself cordial, affectionate, conciliating, careful not to irritate little susceptibilities, and discovering good qualities in every one. He studied to prevent discord, appeased it when

it appeared, and had always at hand a kind, reasonable word, which restored harmony. I was side by side with him during five months; during that time I saw him every day, and often many times during the day. I was honoured with his confidence, and I have for him a deep friendship. During that long and intimate acquaintance I never discovered in his conduct one act which in any measure diminished my esteem and respect. At one time I thought that the military command could no longer be left to him; I told him so. Being too incompetent in these grave matters to be authorized in any independent judgment, I was only the weak echo of a clamour growing louder every minute, and which reached the Government, and affected the peace of Paris. He knew, by the importunate criticisms which he had the goodness to receive from me, that I should have preferred the application of systems different from his. I found him, at that sad juncture, what he always was, calm, sincere, disinterested, but firm in his sentiment. I had the misfortune to wound him, but I have too much confidence in his elevation of character not to be sure that he understood all my pain in being constrained to do so.

That which distinguishes General Trochu, and makes him truly one of nature's *élite*, is his nobility of soul; this raises him above fortune; too much, perhaps, for in order to conduct human affairs, we must not be indifferent to fortune. With him the Christian philosopher rules the soldier, and subjects the statesman. He obeys duty without regard to success, and the conviction of having done right consoles him too easily for failure. Brave to temerity, forgetting himself in the midst of the greatest dangers, he yet continually hesitated to engage his army, and, to the last, he failed in that boldness for it of which he was so prodigal for himself. In the direction of civil affairs, he showed the same virtues, the same indecisions, a like abnegation in what concerned himself, with too decided a leaning towards the spirit of resignation. He was for the rest very little prepared to play a political part, he repeated this continually, although he would abandon nothing, through a conscientious scruple not to neglect one of the obligations intrusted to him. The result was, that, without knowing it, he yielded to influences which he ought to have opposed; and, in spite of

his extreme loyalty, he consulted too much those who were in the habit of never contradicting him.

My friend M. Ernest Picard was not among this number, for while he recognised the rare merit of the General, he very soon discovered what was necessary to make his character complete. His fine, penetrating sagacity was not at fault. He confided to me his disquietude and doubts. How many times in quitting the Council, and in returning together in the middle of the night, did we speak of our perplexities! More disposed than he was to hope, I displayed, as well as I was able, my reasons which ought to dissipate fear; to have expressed them to our colleagues would have been pains lost, so great was their confidence. And besides, it was difficult for us not to be struck with all the reasons which justified the credit and authority of the General. It was not, in truth, a pure caprice of fate which had raised him to that high position, but an assemblage of facts which rendered his elevation perfectly legitimate. It was indeed by his actions that he had gained in the army an indisputable reputation for courage, uprightness, and independence. His conduct in the Crimea had been brilliant, and his book upon the army had decided his place in public opinion. Appointed Governor of Paris, he became the hope and idol of the city; he could not, in the moment of the tempest, cast away the helm which fell to his hand. His colleagues charged with holding it with him, could not, moreover, do without his aid. In short, it must be confessed, that in accepting this task he devoted himself to it entirely: he brought to the work all the vigilance, care, and toil which could be produced by human effort; he sought the truth with ardour and good faith; recoiling before no fatigue, making himself acquainted with every fact, and rallying round him all those who might serve the common cause. If he had succeeded, he would have had all the courtiers of success at his feet. Now, he finds them leagued against him to crush him. It belongs to those who know what were his designs, what he did, to tell that he generously spent his entire being in triumphing over the immense difficulties, among which another, acting otherwise, might perhaps have succeeded no better than he did.

It was of the greatest importance to commit the command of the National Guard to the hands of an influential man, a wise administrator, one who, while firm, prudent, and possessing some prestige, should inspire his troops with an entire confidence. In spite of his real merit, General de la Motterouge, formerly aide-de-camp to the Emperor, and questor of the Corps Législatif, did not fulfil these conditions. He knew this himself, and begged General Trochu, who had nominated him provisionally, to agree to his resignation. Upon the proposition of some of our colleagues, he was replaced by M. Tamisier, formerly representative of the people, and distinguished as an officer of artillery. It would have been impossible to appoint a man more true and devoted, or a better republican. Unhappily, he had neither the activity nor the suppleness necessary to the management of men. The authority wavered in his hands, and his courage, which would have astonished all before the enemy, was powerless to conquer the timidity of his character. In the place of originality he had only a patriotic devotion, and his natural gentleness was a constant obstacle to the vigour which he ought to have displayed in disciplining those confused elements which it was his mission to govern.

It was principally owing to his opposition that M. Picard's and my attempts failed to obtain the mobilization of the National Guard. We both attached great importance to this measure, and we maintained it with energy. General Tamisier and M. Trochu argued the inconvenience of enfeebling companies and battalions, from which all the strongest elements would be taken away. The captain of the National Guard maintained this in a long dissertation. Our proposition was therefore rejected; it was brought up again afterwards, but it is well known that by the 20th January it was scarcely possible to organize 80,000 mobilized Guards.

Nevertheless, each day brought some fresh bad news, and we drew nearer to the moment when Paris would be separated from the rest of France. On the 9th of September, General Ulrich acquainted us with the almost hopeless condition of Strasbourg. Two days after, we learned the bombardment of the town of Toul, which resisted heroically. The enemy had

invaded the department of Seine-et-Marne, and had been seen in Seine-et-Oise. It was necessary to act promptly, and to maintain the action of the Government in the provinces and abroad.

The diplomatic body had met, and had informed me that several of its members had received from their Governments the order to leave Paris, so as to remain in communication with other parts. Among these were the Ambassadors of England and Austria, the Minister of Italy, and the Ambassador of Russia. We deliberated in council upon the course to be pursued, and it was first of all decided that three of us should adjourn to Tours to represent the Government there, to organize the defence and to continue diplomatic arrangements. The great difficulty was in the choice of the men to undertake this mission. M. Crémieux was the first named, as he was Keeper of the Seals ; it was thought that the Minister of Foreign Affairs should join him, and I requested that M. Picard might accompany me.

But when I deliberately faced this decision, and reflected that I was about to abandon Paris in the hour of peril, I could not find the courage to go. I was among those who regarded the defence of that great city as a most hazardous venture. I felt clearly the imperious duty of its defence, in case of the impossibility of an honourable peace. Paris had to raise the standard of France, humiliated by the Emperor in the trenches of Sedan. But what general had the ability to conduct so gigantic an enterprise? Who should solve the complicated problems it involved? Who could appease the passions, discipline the wills, and hinder the explosions of public wrath excited by suffering and reverses? I foresaw insurrections, and it seemed to me that, brought into power through a storm, I could not withdraw, either from the responsiblity or the dangers of those that might burst forth. As to diplomatic business, I had only carried it on during a few days; but this short experience had served to settle my opinion upon the intentions of Europe. She consented to show us some interest, but she subjected any action to a preliminary condition: a real success, or at least a resistance of a certain length of time. It was therefore at Paris that our fate had to be decided, and it

was there that our efforts had to be concentrated. It was necessary to assemble in Paris all that could render these efforts effectual, and I was under the delusion that in separating myself from it, I should have weakened it. Afterwards, my scruples were regarded as a weakness. I do not attempt to excuse them; I simply state the considerations to which I yielded; they were not entirely without foundation, since they were perceived by my colleagues. It was decided that M. Picard and myself should remain in Paris.

M. Crémieux requested to start alone. The Council sent with him two of its members, M. l'Amiral Fourichon and M. Glais-Bizoin.

This choice has been criticised with bitterness. I will not discuss the accusations of which it has formed the pretext. I confine myself to saying that the three persons delegated by the Government deserved its full confidence.

M. Crémieux and M. Glais-Bizoin were two tried patriots, whose long career had in no degree cooled their ardour nor diminished their devotion. Admiral Fourichon was recommended by the firmness of his character, the extent of his military knowledge, the authority of a justly-respected name. Why should we not expect from them valuable aid? They took with them representatives from every office in the Ministry, chosen from among the superior *employés;* these were accompanied by experienced men. The offices were therefore filled in the usual way, and a union was effected between the different parts of France, and, if I may judge by the department of Foreign Affairs, nothing really suffered. Beside the administrative mechanism, it is true, the general direction had to urge the country to a rapid and earnest action, which would put in requisition all resources in order to apply them to the defence. It is not for me to say how this task was performed by my honourable colleagues, but I am able to affirm, without fear of contradiction, that they devoted themselves to it with a patriotic zeal which never flagged. Did they commit errors? Might it not have been possible to arrive at better results? Might not the various springs they had to set in motion have received a firmer touch? These are questions which will long be discussed, and which may be variously resolved. One thing is

certain, that is, that the delegation of Tours met with difficulties similar to those with which we had to struggle in Paris; difficulties so much the more powerful that they belonged to the very nature of things. I can quite understand how many may blame us for being deceived as to the possibility of an effectual resistance. Count Bismarck has often expressed a similar idea to me: it was an unreasonable enterprise to place a badly-armed crowd in opposition to troops accustomed to war, disciplined, well commanded, and superior in number. The enemy had not counted upon this, and during the siege, by means of letters seized upon the soldiers and from prisoners, we learned the astonishment and rage which our resistance roused in the besiegers. No one seemed to imagine it possible to fight with so little chance of success. This idea was general in Europe, and it would be a great mistake to suppose that we were ignorant of our position. But, as I have already said, we placed duty above every other consideration, and we considered that this consisted in making every effort to preserve the independence of the country. We would not despair while Paris was firm, while two-thirds of France still belonged to us, while the nation breathed the one desire of sacrifice. Are we to be accused of obstinacy? Even now, after all our disasters, we have not the courage to regret the course we took. We suffer with France, we are proud of her heroism. She may be pitied, but she must be respected. All bleeding, mutilated, pillaged as she is, she has not to reproach herself with weakness. She weeps over her children, marching to death half-clad, half-armed, led by inefficient officers; but she blesses and venerates them. She knows that their noble example will not be lost. And it is in the civic mourning which they have left behind them that France places her confidence and hope.

But those who were condemned to direct so terrible an enterprise might expect to be crushed by public opinion. Our colleagues at Tours have not escaped this inexorable law any more than ourselves. Like us, they will accept its severity without a murmur, requesting the investigation of their conduct, and certain that, at least, this justice will be rendered them,—that, if they have committed faults, they have preserved

the dignity of France, and prepared a future which will reinstate her.

M. Crémieux left Paris on the 12th of September, M. Glais-Bizoin and M. Fourichon followed him two days after. Before I left for Ferrières, I requested my colleagues to hasten forward the elections. I showed them by the diplomatic despatches, confirmed by the language of the ambassadors, the extreme importance which Europe attached to this. Without acquainting them with the attempt I was about to make, I told them I needed this support in order to negotiate. Our personal interest no less imperiously demanded it. We were anxious to lay down the power whose burden became more and more crushing. The discussion was long and animated. I was supported by M. Picard and General Trochu. The majority of the Council decided that the municipal elections should take place on the 28th of September, and those for the Assembly on the 2d of October, instead of the 16th, the day fixed by the decree of the 8th of September.

This resolution, alas! was soon superseded. Eight days after, on the 24th of September, a fresh decree adjourned the municipal elections, and those of the Constituent Assembly, to an indefinite period. This decree considers—

"The material obstacles placed by present events in the way of exercising political rights."

And it adds, Article 3,—

"Fresh dates will be fixed as soon as events permit, both for the election of members of the Assembly, for the municipal elections of Paris and the Seine, and for those of the corporations where the war would have hindered the electors from meeting in sufficient numbers."

I now refer to an act which has brought upon the Government of the 4th of September the most violent and apparently well-founded accusations. It has been regarded as a usurpation of the rights of France, prompted by the miserable calculations of personal ambition: it was in order to retain power in our own hands that, in contempt of every principle, we were opposed to consulting the nation. We guessed that the Assembly of the representatives of the nation would reject us;

we also knew that it would not preserve the Republic. It is to this double interest that we sacrificed our duty and the destiny of the country.

In reply to these reproaches, we only need to point out the contradiction existing between the three decrees of the 8th, 17th, and 24th of September; the first fixing the elections for the 16th, the second hastening them forward for the 2d, a contradiction explained by the difference in position marked by the three dates. On the 8th of September our power had just begun, and one of its first acts was an appeal to the country. Unable to reckon on what might happen on the morrow; but all believing what was in fact the common opinion, that the struggle would be short and decisive, and suspended perhaps by an armistice, we fixed the convocation of the electors for a period sufficiently distant to allow of a preliminary conclusion. Such was at least the consideration which determined the vote of the majority of the Council, obstinately opposed by the minority, who desired that an earlier date should be fixed upon. Some days later this minority brought the rest round to their opinion, because there was at that moment a plausible hope of negotiation, which would have allowed of the meeting of the Assembly. The interview of Ferrières dispelled it. It dissipated the illusion which had taken possession of too many minds, that Prussia made war on the Empire, and not upon France. It discovered to us an adversary urged on by the pride of victory, implacable in his designs, trampling under foot all justice to obey only his material interest. To resist *à outrance*, or to submit, were the only two alternatives left us by its haughty declarations. The choice could not be doubted. If France could have been consulted, she would have been unanimous in demanding resistance; Paris, which was about to take the chief and most dangerous part, had no need to speak; her ardent and imperious will manifested itself by such clear signs, that one must have been blind not to see, and senseless not to have understood.

While I was yet accomplishing the painful mission which I had taken upon myself, the rumour of my departure spread, and soon caused great agitation in the city. My colleagues thought this so threatening, that the very evening of my return, on the

20th of September, they wanted to calm it by a proclamation of such a nature as to dissipate all doubts on our intentions. We wrote the following lines, which were posted up during the night :—

" The rumour has spread that the Government has meditated the abandonment of the policy for the maintenance of which it has been placed in the post of honour and peril.

" This policy is formulated in these terms :—

" Not an inch of territory, not a stone of our fortresses.

" The Government will maintain this to the end."

On the same walls the populace read, at the same time, this zealous and patriotic appeal :—

" Citizens,—It is now the 21st of September.

" Seventy-eight years ago our fathers founded the Republic, and swore among themselves, before the foreigner who had desecrated the sacred soil of the country, to live free, or to die fighting.

" They kept their vow, they conquered, and the Republic of 1793 remains in the memory of men as the symbol of heroism and national greatness.

" The Government established at the Hotel de Ville amid the enthusiastic cries of 'Vive la République' cannot allow this glorious anniversary to pass without hailing it as a great example.

" May the spirit which animated our predecessors be in us, and we shall conquer.

" To-day let us honour our forefathers, and to-morrow let us learn, like them, to force the way to victory by confronting death.

" Vive la France ! Vive la République !

" The Minister of the Interior,

" LÉON GAMBETTA."

At the same time the Governor of Paris published an energetic order of the day, by which he branded with the stigma of cowardice the shameful weakness of the regiments which had fled before the enemy at the combat of Chatillon. He reminded all, citizens as well as soldiers, of the fate which awaited them if they failed in their duty.

"The truth is," said he, "that these worthless men have compromised from the commencement a military action whose results, in spite of them, will be considerable. Other infantry belonging to divers regiments joined with them.

"Already the misfortunes we have met with since the beginning of the war have caused the return of undisciplined and demoralized soldiers to Paris, bringing disquietude and turmoils, taking advantage of circumstances to escape from the authority of their chiefs, and from all restraint.

"I am resolved to put an end to such grave disorders. I command the defenders of Paris to seize all arms from isolated men, soldiers, or mobile guards, who wander about in the town in a state of intoxication, who spread dishonour and scandal, and by their conduct disgrace the uniform they wear."

And after reviewing the articles of the military code, which punish with death—

I. The abandonment of his post by a soldier before the enemy, or before armed rebels,

II. The pillage or destruction of merchandise,

III. The destruction of the resources of the defence,

The Governor added,—

"It is likewise a duty for the Governor to defend Paris, which is about to undergo the trials of a siege, and to maintain order. By present arrangements he has united to himself all good and earnest men, of whom there is a large number in the city."

The next day, the 21st, to satisfy public opinion, which loudly claimed official information on what had passed at Ferrières, we inserted in the Official Journal the following notice:—

"Before the commencement of the siege of Paris, the Minister of Foreign Affairs wanted to know the intentions of Prussia, which had been silent until then.

"We proclaimed our intentions the day after the Revolution of the 4th of September.

"Without ill-will towards Germany, having always condemned the war, which the Emperor began for an exclusively dynastic interest, we said,—Let us stay this barbarous struggle, which is decimating peoples for the profit of a few ambitious men. We will accept equitable conditions of peace. We will

not yield either an inch of our territory, or a stone of our fortresses.

"Prussia replies to these overtures by demanding Alsace and Lorraine by right of conquest.

"She would not even consent to consult the population; she would dispose of them as a flock of sheep.

"And when the convocation of an Assembly is named, which shall constitute a definitive power, and vote peace or war, Prussia demands, as the preliminary condition to an armistice, the occupation of the besieged towns, the fort of Mont Valérien, and the garrison of Strasbourg as prisoners of war.

"Let Europe judge of this!

"For us, the enemy is unmasked. He places us between dishonour and duty: our choice is made.

"Paris will resist to the last; the departments will come to her aid; and, God helping us, France will be saved."

The next day, September 23d, Paris read the report on the interview at Ferrières. The effect was immense. All classes of the population were united in a common sentiment of patriotic indignation; all accepted with enthusiasm the struggle rendered necessary by intolerable exactions.

This sentiment and these resolutions were legitimate; and if terrible misfortunes have been the consequence, it is Prussia alone who is responsible. France and her Government have only endured them.

Who, in truth, could excuse the precipitation with which, after having crushed the Imperial army and trampled the Empire to dust, Prussia urged forward the torrent of her victorious armies towards disarmed Paris, disturbed by a revolution, enfeebled by the invasion of nearly 500,000 fugitives, who took shelter behind her ramparts? I know that if I consult what are called the laws of war, that is to say, the art of destroying and enslaving nations, I shall find this rule, that the conqueror ought to leave no respite to the conquered whom he has not completely reduced. But I ask to judge by the customs of to-day, and to urge, if it be only as a protest, the principles of justice above those of brute force. Prussia has triumphed; she has forced from us four departments; she weighs down those populations which repulse her with political servitude;

but, all-powerful as she is, she is not able to change the ideas of good and evil. She is not able to make what is contrary to the right conformable to it; if, after her victory, a reparation and guarantee were due to her, nothing authorized her to advance upon our territory, silent, inflexible, profiting by our stupor in order to crush us. To fall upon a capital containing more than two millions of human creatures,—to range round it a formidable artillery,—to prepare a bombardment which must destroy invaluable wealth,—to scatter everywhere ruin and death, and that without making any attempt at negotiation,—is a hardihood which displays a strange disdain of the laws of civilisation, which are before those of war. And when the threatened city inquires by what sacrifices she may avoid these calamities, when she solicits a truce which may enable the nation to consult and to establish a regular government, to reply, "You are France, and it is upon your population, upon your wives and children, upon your property, that our fury is about to spend itself, if you do not consent to save yourselves by abandoning two provinces,"—this was to inflame in the city thus challenged, and in the country summoned to mutilate itself, a passion for resistance which the most inert could not escape. It was to force the negotiators to silence, to leave the decision to cannons, which were to be the arbiters of the conflict.

Such is the explanation of the effect produced by the revelations of Ferrières; the opinion of Europe turned in our favour. In spite of their hostility to us, the foreign Governments and peoples did not admit the right of Prussia to despoil France. The press almost universally condemned this blow struck at the European balance of power, and at the rights of populations. The *Indépendance Belge* of September 16th says:—"If we may believe the almost unanimous sentiment of the German press, a peace without the basis of an increase of territory to the profit of Germany and to the detriment of France, would be a dupery, an illusive guarantee for future security. Such are the exaggerations and the aberrations which the intoxication of victory explains without justifying. We have already protested against this opinion, affirmed in Germany in numerous newspaper articles, and in the serious deliberations of several public and private associations. We persist in repeating this protest, in

which Germany herself would join, if it were not a question of her own interest, and if she were in her usual *sang-froid.*

"The dismemberment of France would be an injustice and a crime.

"An injustice, we say, and in order to contradict us, it will not do to argue that the Empire, if conqueror, would not have hesitated to take possession of the left bank of the Rhine. In the first place, it is no longer a question of the Empire—it is more than conquered; it is dead. And it may be said that France, twice its victim, is cured for ever of that unconstitutional malady. And besides, what is the meaning of this theory of reprisals from people to people, this retaliation in politics? You want to rob me, therefore I rob you. What is this reasoning worth? If the Empire had desired to force from Germany the Rhine provinces, whose patriotism is essentially German, we should have severely judged this annexation, this violence. Each time that this idea has appeared in France we have condemned it in the interest of peace, but, above all, in the name of right and justice.

"Being now inspired by the same principles, we are therefore authorized in blaming any project of annexation on the other side, in condemning with the same energy any idea of diminution of French territory. We blame it in the name of modern thought; for if it be a conquest according to modern ideas, it is the very opposite of the spirit of conquest. We cannot admit that a victorious nation, however legitimate and complete her victory may be, has the right to treat as she pleases those populations among whom her armies have established themselves, the right to take them for her own, without any consideration of their desire; the right to place them in this or that State, like a flock of sheep in a fold.

"The utilitarian considerations invoked by the German press are no more in favour of its thesis than those of justice and equity; and, far from insuring her own tranquillity and that of the world, Germany, in abusing her victory, would expose herself to perpetual disquietude, and she would deposit on European soil the seeds of war which must develop themselves sooner or later."

The *Tages-Presse* of Vienna eloquently expressed the same

ideas in an article of the 13th September. It supported them by the following reflections, which are the just expression of an issue of most formidable probability:—

"The German newspapers attempt to deceive themselves as to the valorous resolutions of France, and regard them as pure boasting; this is a strange mistake. France has nine millions of men, her territory is vast, her resources are, so to speak, inexhaustible; she has two months to re-victual; she can prolong the war indefinitely if she chooses, and she can easily decide to do so, for she may count eventually upon victory. . . Let France resist, and King William will find himself reduced to this painful alternative, of returning home without having been able to secure the signing of the peace by ravaging France, or to follow out the complete subjugation of that nation, an attempt in which, however great may be his strength, it will be exhausted before that of France.

"These considerations seem to give some probability to the project, which rumours from Berlin attribute to King William, of replacing his prisoner Napoleon on the throne. In this way only could he escape from a difficulty to which neither he nor his counsellors can be blind. He thus unveils the detestable project which he is hatching in private. France, so violently hated, must not only be vanquished, but humiliated, burdened with a shame without parallel, trampled in the dust, a mockery to all pious and just minds, a warning to all those mistaken disciples of the gospel of liberty which that nation, forsaken by Heaven, revealed to the world.

"France is not only an Empire, a nation; she is the living idea of freedom, of human dignity, of independence and humanity.

"There is unfortunately one weak point in all Prussian reasonings. They depend entirely upon this idea: France will not resist. If, however, France does resist, what will you do?"

The *Times* of the same day, announcing the arrival of M. Thiers, says:—"It is evident that France is ready to consent to any terms of peace which do not include a cession of territory. It is no less decided, that if Prussia insists on this point, Paris will sustain a siege.

"In reality, the spirit of resistance may even survive the necessity of surrendering the capital.

"It is possible that the Provisional Government, if it conclude peace, may be exposed to a certain degree of hatred, although it may be at first welcomed as the benefactor of the country.

"It is certain that France desires peace. The signs of this desire appear on all sides. . . . Nevertheless, however strong this desire may be, the resolution not to yield any portion of the territory appears no less strong. We do not know what will be the result of the siege of Paris, but it is evident that if the country were invited to choose between a cession of territory and the sufferings of a siege, France would choose the siege of Paris as being the lesser evil.

"The King, Baron von Moltke, and Count Bismarck, will insure guarantees of a durable peace, and will stipulate a reimbursement of the expenses of the war; but they will carefully avoid bequeathing to their successors embarrassing difficulties."

If such was the current of European ideas, its impetuosity in France may be guessed, and particularly in Paris. After the interview of Ferrières it became irresistible, and caused all differences to be forgotten. Until then, opinion was divided; the partisans of peace were numerous. From this moment, everybody thought only of acting; classes, opinions, parties were all effaced; and all the inhabitants of Paris, without exception, had but one will: resistance to the last. The city offered the finest of spectacles, that of concord in the thought of a patriotic sacrifice. The most illustrious, as the humblest citizen, the richest as well as the poorest, seemed inflamed with the same generous passion. Men who were prevented from taking an active part by their rank, age, or delicate constitution, considered it an honour to join the National Guard, to go through the drill, and to pass the nights on the ramparts; many, like M. de Piscatory, paid for this zeal with their life. On a cold evening in November, a young workman, wearing the signs of a serjeant, awakens suddenly an old man sleeping by the bivouac fire; the old man rises gently, takes his gun, and follows his leader; it was President Bonjean, the illustrious martyr of the Commune; he thus preluded that sublime hero-

ism with which he sacrificed himself in the cause of right. Gifts in money and kind flowed into the mayoralties, where all the means of succour were being organized which were so abundantly distributed during the siege. Full of the memory of 1814 and 1815, many thought that the tradespeople would recoil before the necessities of a defence which must ruin them. The tradespeople of 1870 would not think of their own material interests, except in sacrificing them nobly. The upper and middle classes rendered themselves admirable by their courage and abnegation. They could measure the extent of the loss which resistance must inflict on them; for many this would be the loss of a fortune honourably acquired. In face of this certain prospect, they showed neither hesitation nor weakness. On every hand committees of assistance were formed. The refugees from rural districts formed municipalities, at the head of which were placed generous and beneficent citizens. It seemed that with this sublime effort, this valorous population must triumph over every obstacle; it did surmount immense difficulties, and it would be an inexcusable error, a culpable injustice, not to recognise the great things it did. Europe demanded from her to hold out some weeks; she held out more than four months, enduring every conceivable misery; she only surrendered to avoid destroying by famine 2,000,000 of innocent human beings; she gained an immortal glory, which posterity will yield her, thus avenging the undeserved attacks of her contemporaries. Her attitude, and that of the provincial armies, raised the standard of France. The struggle she maintained was not then useless, and those who encouraged it only did their duty.

But on the threshold of the formidable career on which they were about to enter, calling upon all France to unite with them, feeling the urgent necessity of concentrating all minds on one idea, that of the defence, they did not think it needful to ask the vote of the nation, which had risen unanimously for the combat. It was not only the physical impossibility of this vote, it was above all its moral impossibility which determined them. In this, they yielded to the unanimous opinion of Paris, to that of the Commission of the Corps Législatif and of the Cabinet of the 9th of August, who, although under much less grave circumstances, had thought that the elections were incompatible

with the defence, and M. Thiers, President of the Commission, had said: "A constituent Assembly will be convoked as soon as circumstances shall permit." Count Palikao, Minister of War, said: "The Government admits that the country ought to be consulted, when we are free from the present difficulties, for which object we must unite all our efforts." The fact is that at that critical moment a higher duty ruled the resolutions of political men, and France itself. This duty was to expel the foreigner, and, to accomplish this, honour commanded us not to turn aside a moment, to have no other thought, no other object.

CHAPTER VI.

INTERIOR POLICY—COMMENCEMENT OF THE OPERATIONS OF THE SIEGE—DEPARTURE OF M. GAMBETTA.

THE one thought of the Government was so entirely concentrated upon the defence, that it applied itself with most scrupulous care to give to its acts no exclusively political expression. In this it obeyed two sentiments equally honourable, which consisted, firstly, in not usurping the rights of the nation; secondly, in furnishing no pretext for abstention to those who might not favour the Republic. Perhaps it was mistaken; societies which are overthrown in a violent crisis instinctively seek a starting-point in a clear, well-defined idea. They ask to be led by a sincere passion, and to retain any reserve in such extremities is to weaken their action. Doubtless, in declaring itself openly Republican, the Government would have exposed itself to the attack of a few dissatisfied ones. But it would have crushed the seeds of irritation and hostility which were not long in developing themselves in a part of Paris. It was to this spot that its attention should have been directed; for the capital having become the principal point of the enemy's attack, it was necessary to obtain from her the greatest possible amount of material and moral force. It was needful to prevent mistrust, and to disarm beforehand those agitators who excited it.

To gain this end, it was necessary that the acts of the Government should not allow a moment's doubt of its firm intention of founding and maintaining the Republic. I know that many sincere people believe that it did too much in this direction, and blame us for it. This is because they hold more to appearances than to realities; they only see the official formu-

laries on the placards, and the nomination of a certain number of prefects. Those are what I call appearances, and in our revolutions we are wrong, on the one hand, in being frightened by them, and, on the other, in resting contented with them. We are too ready to take a change of words and persons for a change of system and institutions. Nothing resembles it less. We might generally, without disadvantage, leave some old formulas and respect the position of old servants of the State, provided that, in effecting wise reforms, we mark out the way which the nation desires to follow. Now, the day following the 4th of September, the Government would have taken a most politic step if it had decreed the abolition of the conscription, and the universal obligation of military service and primary education. It would thus have laid down two fundamental principles, accepted by the majority of the country, especially the first, and it would have clearly indicated that a new era had dawned upon France. At the same time it would have satisfied a sentiment of justice and good sense in arranging proceedings against the Emperor, and those Ministers who with him had declared the war. It was a considerable error not to seem to comprehend the enormity of their crime, or not to have the power to punish it. It was disturbing the public conscience and preparing fresh agitations. The issue has proved this only too clearly, and the Government of the National Defence has its share in the responsibility for the bold plots of that party, always fatal to France, which would still take advantage of her, after having mutilated and ruined her.

Nevertheless, these measures were put aside from motives whose worthy and noble character I appreciate. The Government, which adjourned the elections so as to give itself up entirely to the duty of the defence, did not think it possible to pass in its own action the limits that this duty had put upon that of the country, not sufficiently regarding this fact, in my opinion, that those measures affected the defence, most essentially, by solidifying and levelling its very foundation; it confined itself to effacing the 75th Article in the Constitution of the year VIII., which, by protecting public functionaries against any proceedings, covered the most scandalous abuses. This was to give themselves up to the free control of their fellow-citizens. The

Government abolished the surety for journals, and took into consideration the question of judicial organization.

These were the only bold strokes. No one can consider them extravagant, nor find in them the cause of our unsuccess. The Government regarded itself as a soldier in the breach, fighting for the integrity of the territory and the independence of the nation, and when the legal representatives of the nation had the opportunity of meeting together, they found all the questions intact except that which fortune had decided against us, but without the possibility of blaming those men who, to the last, had sacrificed all to avoid it.

On the 19th of September the investment of Paris was complete, and the last telegraph was cut which bound us to the outside world by the line of the West. Then commenced that almost absolute deprivation of news which during the siege was the source of painful suffering for the population, and of cruel embarrassment for the Government. Few had foreseen this: all were too much inclined to believe that the complete blockade of so vast a circumference was impossible. The delusion did not last long; from the first day all communication was intercepted, and the Parisians could only depend for news upon extraordinary and uncertain methods.

It is well known they were obliged to have recourse to aërostats, which, in spite of the imperfections of that means of locomotion, rendered eminent services to their country. A decree of the 25th of September authorized the Post-Office authorities to employ this means for the transport of despatches both to the provinces and foreign countries. The same day, the first balloon from the besieged left Paris, directed by M. Marceau and Wilfrid de Fouvielle, bearing numerous despatches and twenty carrier-pigeons.

These birds were indispensable for bringing us information from without. Their marvellous instinct bringing them back to their dove-cot, rendered them most precious messengers; the person who sent them off, hid under their wings a little glass tube, in which he enclosed despatches, which were reduced to a very small volume by means of photographic appliances. Misfortune and necessity produce ingenuity. The prodigies

conceived by the captives are well known. In a very short time the administration of the post became marvellous; the contents of a number of the *Journal Officiel* did not occupy a surface half the size of a finger-nail. The text was enlarged by the aid of a microscope. It was in this way that, during the last two months of the siege, a writing of from four to five centimetres in length and three in breadth, contained, besides the official despatches filling five or six ordinary pages, more than 20,000 private telegrams. And yet it is easy to understand the insufficiency of this means of communication; the balloons could only start when there was a favourable wind; the natural dangers to which the travellers were exposed were augmented by the attacks of the Prussians, who did not hesitate to fire upon them. In their rage at not being able to reach them, they went so far as to threaten with death those aëronauts who fell into their hands—maintaining that the laws of war permitted them to be counted as spies crossing their lines. This barbarous claim only served to animate the courage and increase the number of those who offered their services to the Government. Some were taken and sent to German fortresses; others were lost. Some, seized by the tempests frequent in the first months of winter, were transported to distant countries; one, after a journey of some hours, landed in Norway. These perilous adventures, and the immense interest in the safe arrival of our balloons, caused all men of science to study the best means of guiding them. M. Dupuy de Lhôme gave much time to this subject, and made many unsuccessful efforts; and to the last we had only this dangerous means of giving the departments the information which our interests so much required them to possess.

The means they employed for replying to us did not endanger human life; but it was even more imperfect; it only transmitted despatches which were too short, and at intervals often very distant.

Twice we remained twenty days without news, and often more than a week. One must undergo these tortures in order to have any idea of them. This absolute ignorance of external events from which we were hoping for rescue and a rule of conduct, is an inexpressible torture. It was often caused by the severity

of the weather, which stopped our carrier-pigeons; and when, each day, we found with despair the implacable persistency of this temperature which surrounded us with darkness, we were often tempted to despair. We were hourly assailed by inventors proposing schemes, according to them infallible. All were tried; some inspired us with hopes. During the first days of the siege, a cable, secretly immerged in the bed of the Seine, furnished us with communication with Rouen. The Prussians discovered it, and broke the wire. Men eminent in science believed that, by means of a strong electric pile, they could use the water as a conductor. M. Jules Simon occupied himself zealously with their work, which failed like others—like the floating bottles and submerged appliances, luminous telegraphs, and a hundred other inventions vaunted as excellent. I only name them to show, if possible, the perpetual torment in which we lived, and which increased to a terrible degree our dangers and anguish.

This was one of the gravest reasons for which many excellent persons considered the resistance of Paris a mere chimera. They could not admit that so large a population, composed of such diverse elements, living especially under the sway of imagination and feeling, was capable of undergoing such moral uncertainty. Such was the opinion of Count Bismarck, who, examining the hypotheses which the siege might present, thought it his duty to combat the system of investment and reduction by famine. In one of our numerous interviews at Versailles, he told me what had been his views on the subject, and I confess that they seemed to me remarkably just.

He maintained, contrary to the opinion of the Generals, who prevailed, and especially in opposition to M. de Blumenthal, that there were enormous difficulties in completely blockading and starving Paris. If the siege were prolonged, blind and formidable passions must be aroused in the midst of that immense city.

"I expect, for my part," said he to the King, "to see a *dénouement* which will surpass in fury and disasters all that historians have told of the siege of Jerusalem. Many hundreds of thousands of inhabitants may perish in the horrors of famine, or in a vast conflagration. Your Majesty will bear the respon-

sibility of this catastrophe. Besides, the Parisians will defend themselves with so much the more obstinacy, as they will be separated from the departments, whose sufferings they will not know. It will be the same in the departments, deprived of news from Paris. For myself," pursued the Count, "I should have liked our troops to advance on Paris, and bombard it (but without surrounding it) by means of an entrenched camp, established in the most favourable position—for example, at the mouth of the Marne. This camp, well placed, would have defied all your attacks; by remaining in free communication with the provinces, you would have seen that resistance was there impossible; your own would have been weakened, and the war would have ended two months earlier."

This episode, upon which I have no opinion to give, is another proof that every one feared the moral disorder which the siege must cause among the population—by changing its habits, exciting its feelings, by condemning it to suffer in its most cherished affections, as in its most legitimate needs. It was, in truth, a prey successively to diverse perturbations, which resembled a real passion. The pursuit of spies was the first of these agitations. It had begun from the commencement of the war; and, far from combating popular prejudices, the Imperial Government joined in the movement by impolitic measures directed against foreigners. Paris contained from 60,000 to 70,000 Germans. Those of an age to bear arms were recalled by the authorities of their country; some departed voluntarily, many were obliged to remain. The people saw in them spies, and claimed their expulsion. The petitions which expressed this desire, firmly supported by many of our colleagues, decided the Minister of the Interior to exercise certain rights allowed by the Legislation against foreigners. There were, nevertheless, numerous exceptions in favour of inoffensive residents. It was upon these that the fury of the crowd fell. Sometimes even it took revenge on Frenchmen who had the misfortune to have fair hair and beard. When a passer-by was marked out as a German, he was assailed, maltreated, conducted to the guard-house. The National Guards, who considered themselves authorized to act as policemen, arrested in the streets those stigmatized by the public outcry.

They did not hesitate to force the doors of some of their houses, and to search them. One of these illegal transactions took place in the case of a Prussian, to whom an American citizen had given an asylum on displaying his flag. The Stars of the Confederation did not hinder the invasion. The Minister of the United States complained of this, with reason; the Governor of Paris, on the morrow, the 29th of September, had the following notice posted about the city:—

"The city of Paris, entirely under arms, offers to the country the great example of a population which nothing has been able to entice into disorder. But the public mind, which has in this respect deceived the hopes of the enemy, seems to be yielding to a fever of mistrust, which has its perils.

"Before vain appearances, and under the most frivolous pretexts, houses have been broken into, and persons maltreated. It has even happened that the flag of friendly nations, sympathetic to the Republic, has not sufficed to make the houses it protected to be respected, and that officers of the National Guard have so mistaken their duty as to join the exciters of disorder.

"I command that inquiry be made into these facts, and that the persons guilty of these grave abuses be arrested. The arrangements for vigilance are such as to render vain any attempt on the part of the enemy to gain information in the place; and I remind all that, except in cases followed out by law, the houses of the citizens are to remain inviolable.

"Such acts disturb public peace, attack all the principles of justice and right, and are opposed to the dearest interests as well as the dignity of the defenders of the country."

These wise words calmed the agitation, and the people thought less of maltreating foreigners; but they were disquieted by pretended signals, by means of which the enemy was supposed to receive information. It was believed that these signals were made by lights carried along the upper stories of the houses situated near the rampart. Some National Guards entered by force into these suspected houses, where they found the occupants much annoyed by their appearance. The remonstrances of the authorities were again necessary to bring them to reason.

These conflicts were constantly repeated, and the want of dis-

cipline in the National Guard aggravated them enormously. I have said that its irregular and hasty formation, by introducing elements which never ought to have been admitted, had changed its character, and placed authority in the hands of chiefs often unworthy of exercising it. The pay of one franc and a half per man, and afterwards of 2 francs 25 centimes for a family, increased the disorder. M. Ernest Picard wanted the same sum to be given in rations. He earnestly insisted on this arrangement, which presented some real advantages, but was not practicable. It would have brought about considerable waste, and provoked unanimous complaint. Doubtless the *solde* was too often a premium for idleness and drunkenness; it encouraged the creation of all kinds of corps, asking service only to get the pay. The requirements of citizens who desired to fight and gain the title of defenders of the country multiplied to such a point that the Minister of War was obliged to prove that he had no more guns to give. The Government, on the 30th of September, made a decree, declaring that no more battalions of the National Guard would be formed. But, in considering these difficulties, as well as the expense and trouble they caused, it must not the less be remarked that, without the *solde*, not only would the National Guard have been impossible, but we should have had a formidable insurrection, without the power of preventing or quelling it, caused by rage and hunger, which in a few weeks would have destroyed and dishonoured the defence.

Besides, it would be a great injustice to discredit the merits and the devotion of the National Guard of Paris, and to deny the utility of its concurrence in the operations of the siege. The honour of this siege, which raised France before Europe, and which will remain one of the greatest facts of history, belongs to all who sustained it; but it is impossible to separate the National Guard from the Garde Mobile and the army; they were necessary to each other. Their courage and abnegation form a patrimony of civic and military virtues, of which the country has a right to be proud.

This was M. Trochu's opinion; and if he was wrong in waiting until the 17th of October before he commanded the organi-

zation of the National Guard, he wanted none the less in principle to associate it with the action of his troops. As for this action itself, I cannot and ought not to speak of it but with great reserve, which is sufficiently explained by my incompetence in military affairs, as well as by the habitual difference between my views on these things and those of the Governor of Paris.

Perhaps it would have been wiser on my part to have completely abstained with regard to this subject, and not to have interfered with my colleague's work by any observation. But besides that share of responsibility which belonged to each member of the Government, even in a direction in which he personally took no part, I bore—without resignation or patience, I confess,—the weight of the uncertainty which became daily heavier, and I would willingly have lightened it by a constant activity, by a series of bold acts which I thought possible, and which appeared likely to conduct to an advantageous result. I gathered together all the information which was given me; I sought to enlighten myself by conversing with the officers; I discussed different plans, then I submitted all these ideas to the General. He was always ready to listen to me with a kindness which never failed, and which perhaps encouraged me too much to fatigue him with my criticisms. He could not doubt of my sincerity, any more than I could of his ardent, disinterested desire to do the best that could be done. Thus there was established between us a true confidence and mutual respect. I hid none of my impressions from him, and I believe that, on his side, he hid nothing from me. Often I passed the night in watching the action of the cannon, whose arrival he had announced to me the night before at a certain point. I did my best to encourage him, but a moment always came when I had to stop before his special responsibility, his technical knowledge, and the affectionate frankness with which he let me read in his heart the generous motives by which he was inspired.

Moreover, as he often repeated, and with reason, it is a great mistake to suppose that he condemned the defenders of Paris to inaction, and that he confined himself to repulsing the attacks of the enemy. Many reproaches have been addressed to him; I have no need to enumerate them here. But that which might

accuse him of having done nothing, and dared nothing, would be the most unjust possible. The publication of the journal of the siege would be the best refutation; it would prove that during the first two months the troops were constantly kept in exercise by successive actions—some serious and sanguinary—and that thus they were prepared to strike more decisive blows.

That was the General's idea. And if safety consisted in gaining one or many great battles, in forcing the Prussian lines, effecting a revictualing, and in communicating with the departments, it was necessary to act as he did. I do not discuss the matter, I only relate; and from this point of view facts completely justify the course taken by the military authority.

In judging of these things, it must never be forgotten in what state they were when the Government came into power. The revelations gradually made, so important for truth and for history, have not yet informed us what might have been the designs of the Empire after the disaster of Sedan. As far as Paris is concerned, it is impossible to believe that the Emperor would seriously have defended it, so absolute was the lack of resources of war in which it had been left. Unheard-of efforts were necessary to repair this fault. And it was completely repaired; and in the first days of October the Governor could say, with truth, that Paris was impregnable. The system conceived of by him in order to give as much unity to the resistance as possible was as simple as ingenious. He divided the city into nine sections, each ending in the centre at an acute angle, and at the circumference by two divergent lines. Each sector was bound to the forts which were before him. Each one was commanded by the General of a division, or by a general officer of the marine. These commanders transmitted the Governor's orders to all the troops in their sector, and sent out all their information. By this means it was known what passed every minute on the ramparts, on the forts, and outposts; and these received with the same regularity our communications. Little by little the commanders of each sector acquired great authority in their little realm, and rendered the most eminent services. Often their influence disarmed the bad passions which were continually fermenting in the midst of the general distress. Watching night and day,

they fought with the enemy, and maintained order in the city at the same time. The Government owes them a debt of gratitude; without their intelligence, their courage and devotion, it would have succumbed under the weight of its task. But I should not fear to call them all to witness; all would attest the unparalleled success of the effort which was necessary to put Paris in a position to resist, in the three weeks of September, of which General Trochu availed himself.

Certainly it was far from ready when, ruled by necessity, he attempted, on the 19th of September, to separate the Prussian army, which was marching from Choisy upon Versailles. It is known that a panic taking possession of four regiments rendered this expedition abortive, in which a small number of brave men, led by valiant officers, at the head of whom was General Ducrot, sacrificed themselves to prevent a hasty flight. Eleven days after, the 30th, General Vinoy marched upon the villages of l'Hay, Chevilly, and Thiais, occupied by the enemy. In spite of the murderous fire of the Prussians, entrenched in the battlemented houses, our soldiers, under the orders of General Guilhem, brilliantly took Chevilly whilst the brigade Blaise forced the enemy behind Thiais. But, after three hours' fighting, we were obliged to retreat before forces six times greater than our own. The troops had shown a rare ardour. General Guilhem died heroically while heading an assault on the houses of Chevilly.

Each day, at the outposts, partial engagements accustomed our men to fighting. General Bellemare, who commanded at St. Denis, took Pierrefitte after a lively action. The 12th of October, the Colonel Reille drove the Prussians from Avron, while General Ducrot partially defeated them in a sortie towards the park of Malmaison. At length, on the 13th, the Mobiles of la Côte-d'Or and Aube covered themselves with glory at the combat of Bagneux, where the brave Colonel de Dampierre fell mortally wounded while giving his young soldiers the example of a chivalrous intrepidity.

These operations, and more particularly those of which they were only the prelude, necessarily rendered more and more inopportune the recourse, otherwise desirable, to the nomina-

tion and convocation of an Assembly. The more men became accustomed to the idea of an obstinate resistance, the less they thought of elections. The military part of the population opposed them formally. On this point their opinion never varied; in their eyes the convocation of an Assembly was always incompatible with the defence. Now, the defence at that moment was the one desire of the nation and of Paris. The painful news of the surrender of Strasbourg and Toul only added to the ardour of the people. It seemed that while dealing us the severest blows, destiny was giving us unforeseen strength to react against it. Announcing to the Parisians the cruel trials inflicted on us, the Minister of the Interior did not attempt to deceive them as to the gravity of the situation. He said to them in the following proclamation, on the 2d of October:—

"Citizens,—The Government owes to you the truth without dissimulation, without comment.

"The redoubled blows of bad fortune can no longer disconcert you nor discourage you.

"Your hopes are from France, but you count on yourselves.

"Ready for all, we may tell you all.

"Toul and Strasbourg have succumbed.

"For fifty days these two heroic cities have borne, with the firmest courage, a veritable storm of bullets and shells.

"Exhausted, and lacking ammunition and food, they still defied the enemy; they did not capitulate until their walls were thrown down, crumbling under the fire of the assailants.

"In their fall, their eyes were directed to Paris to assert once more the unity and integrity of the country, the indivisibility of the Republic, bequeathing to us the duty of saving it, and the honour of avenging them.

"Vive la France! Vive la République!

"The Minister of the Interior,

"LÉON GAMBETTA."

Nevertheless, instead of being discouraged, Paris appeared more resolute than ever. The information, obtained with difficulty from without, authorized us to believe that the same enthusiasm reigned in the departments. This may be seen

by the two following despatches, which we received on the 6th of October, and which we hastened to communicate to the public :—

"TOURS, 29*th September* 1870.

"The provinces are rising, and their armies are advancing.

"The departments are being organized.

"Every able-bodied man responds to the cry,—'Not an inch of territory, not a stone from our fortresses! War to the last!'

"(Signed) GLAIS-BIZOIN."

The second is more detailed and more explicit :—

"TOURS, 1*st October* 1870.

"Our only pre-occupation is to urge forward the organization of the forces destined to raise the siege of Paris; everything done with regard to this gives hope. The action of the towns and departments, encouraging by their example the forces which they have organized, combines zealously with that of the military contingent, which form together two armies, each comprising 80,000 men,—one of the Loire, which is about to advance on Paris, the other having for centre . . . . On the side of . . . . is assembled a third group, composed of regular forces, of mobiles, and volunteers. The situation of Bazaine still remains good. The military attaché of . . . . who has been passing through the towns where our troops are assembled, as far as . . . . inclusive, has been surprised by the large number of men, well armed and equipped, and especially of artillery, which were not known to exist. The French legion and Zouaves have come from Rome, sent by our ambassador, and are about to form a solid army ready to march."

M. de Chaudordy wrote to me on the 25th of September :—

"I am endeavouring to urge the Government here to arouse the provinces, and to send all the forces, both regular and irregular, in the rear of the Prussians, that they may be taken between two fires; it appears certain that they sustained great losses before Issy (at the combat of Chatillon), that they did not expect the defence of Paris, and that this perplexes them."

All these arrangements gave us real confidence in the success of our enterprise. At the commencement we were only sustained by conviction of duty; but, seeing Paris so firm and determined, the provinces ready to rise to her rescue, we gave ourselves up to hope, and we believed that, by a sublime *élan*, France might expel the enemy from her borders. General Trochu himself, in spite of his prudent circumspection, was encouraged like ourselves at the sight of the immense city which accepted joyfully the trial of suffering, and only asked to fight. He had conceived the idea of a bold venture to break into the line of investment, giving us free communication with the departments, bringing back to us victory by the return of a prestige now obliterated. But for the accomplishment of this vast design it was indispensable that the action of our colleagues at Tours should be more energetic and active. We knew that they had resolved to proceed to the elections on the 16th of October, we thought that our decree of the 24th of September had not reached them, and we feared a division, which, in presence of the enemy, might have ruined us. The presence of one of the members of the Paris Government could alone prevent this. It was decided that one of us should depart for Tours.

The Government hesitated between M. Gambetta and myself. A former deliberation fixed upon me. I showed the Government that it was necessary to appease the agitation of several large towns, and to obtain the concurrence of the administration of the departments. Now, I did not know one of the prefects named by the Minister of the Interior. The latter would have an influence over them which I could not pretend to have. His youth, his zeal, his popularity, seemed valuable qualities for insuring the success of his mission. Besides, as on the 12th of September, I was checked by scruples which retained me in Paris. I could not consent to abandon it in the midst of its perils and distress, unless the absolute necessity of such a step were proved, and I could not help feeling that it was within the city that I could best serve France.

This opinion was discussed, and prevailed. Much moved himself, it was only with reluctance that M. Gambetta consented to leave Paris. He was far from seeking the part of

dictator. He, as well as ourselves, was not blind to the almost insurmountable difficulties which were reserved for us, but he did not despair of overcoming them. He had not sought the authority with which he was about to be invested, and I am certain that he did not foresee its development; but he devoted himself to the noble and sacred task of saving his country, and the strength of his desire made him believe that he possessed the power to realize it. I shall return with an army, said he to me, in a private conversation, and if I have the glory of delivering Paris, I will ask no more of fortune.

In speaking thus he was sincere. In the course of this narration, I am glad to say that I shall not have to judge all his acts at Tours and Bordeaux; and I shall only have to do with his relations with the National Defence. But it is my duty to declare that, when he left Paris, he obeyed the wish of the Government, that his intentions were upright and patriotic, and that, although convinced that the struggle was commanded by national honour, that it might be the salvation of France, he none the less partook of my sentiments upon the terrible chances that we ran; and, like myself, he thought that it would have been a crime to refuse an honourable peace.

Charged by us to put an end to the divisions of the delegation, he was obliged to have the prerogative of a casting vote. Without this precaution, a deliberation between four colleagues might end in a division. We gave him particular instructions for the execution of our decree respecting the adjournment of the elections.

The calm of the weather delayed his departure for two days. At length, on the 8th of October, in the morning, he took his place in a balloon; a strong south-west breeze bore him rapidly above the department of the Somme. The descent of the balloon took place in a most unfortunate spot, in the midst of the forest of Epineuse, near to Montdidier. He was in great danger, and received several wounds, happily insignificant. He slept that night at Montdidier, and the next day he started for Tours.

CHAPTER VII.

EVENTS OF THE MONTH OF OCTOBER—NEGOTIATIONS—INSURRECTIONARY PLOTS—THE 31ST OF OCTOBER.

If the departure of M. Gambetta showed the firm resolution of the Government to organize the resistance with as much promptitude as energy, the presence of M. Thiers at London and St. Petersburg showed with sufficient clearness that, far from endeavouring to escape from an honourable and pacific issue, he was doing his best to get Europe to aid him in procuring this. Such was, in fact, the real object pursued by the illustrious statesman who had undertaken this delicate mission. Doubtless, he would have been glad to obtain an armed mediation; his instructions proscribed him from requesting this, and our representative at Tours did not cease to give reasons to the Ministers of the neutral States which should have decided them not to refuse. But, although persisting, we did not deceive ourselves; we hoped above all for an intervention. We should have wished it to be collective, but we would have accepted it isolated. If one of the two great powers, whose kind offices we solicited, had taken a resolute attitude, the continuation of the war would have become very difficult. Public opinion only awaited a signal, the other Cabinets would have followed the example. Germany, in spite of her intoxication, would have submitted to the pressure of a moral coalition founded on the general interest and upon justice. I did all that was in my power to gain this end, and if my efforts were not entirely futile, it was certainly due to M. Thiers. Thanks to him, Europe showed its desire to help us, and her disapproval of the exactions of Prussia. She no more contested our right than she recognised that which our enemy arrogated

to itself; and if she were hindered from all negotiation by Count Bismarck, she did not hide that she would join in none which would mutilate France. This was but little, but it was at least something; and, while blaming the other powers for not having done more, we cannot forget what they would not approve. I attach to this an importance which the future will justify; while we yielded nothing voluntarily, Europe did not consent to our dismemberment. Germany had only the right of the strongest.

This appears clearly from diplomatic documents exchanged on the occasion of M. Thiers' mission. The Cabinets of London and Petersburg were at that moment the sovereign arbiters. If they had raised their voice in our favour, Germany would have been held back, great evils would have been avoided, security, prosperity, and peace might have been assured upon solid bases. The two eminent men who were called upon to render this glorious service to Europe and civilisation were wrong in doubting of their strength; they were restrained by divers motives, but both found it impossible to brave the authority which is superior to them, and, by these scruples, they compromised it most gravely.

In fact, it was not surprising that the Queen of England was favourable to Prussia, and that the Emperor of Russia, well-disposed towards France, would not take part against his uncle. They would have desired an arrangement, but they did not consider that we ought to cavil at terms. Their Ministers likewise constantly accused us of an obstinacy which rendered peace impossible. Lord Granville, whose policy may be discussed without impropriety, since he has published all his despatches, pressed us many times to abandon our programme concerning the integrity of territory; he likewise requested the prompt convocation of an Assembly, and as it was impossible for us to accede to these requests, he considered he ought not to act directly. Nevertheless, he did not cease to show us real good-will. He interposed in the negotiation for the armistice; after that, he made us a place in the Black Sea Conference, and it was not his fault that we did not occupy it. At length, during the negotiation of preliminaries, he did not fear to criticise the requirements of Prussia, and to provoke the displeasure of

Count Bismarck. We wanted more; but we do not the less faithfully retain the memory of a kind movement in favour of France.

It was this sentiment which M. Thiers expressed in leaving London to go to St. Petersburg. He showed himself to be at the same time sad and confident, and left the English Ministers convinced that he was neither satisfied nor discouraged. He hoped to find more resolution in Russia, although he knew the reasons which necessitated great circumspection on the part of Prince Gortschakoff. Very desirous of hastening his journey, yet wanting to obtain some information at Vienna, he returned to Tours, where he was on the 20th of September, but he left immediately, passing through Austria. On the 24th he had an interview with Count Beust; on the 27th he arrived at St. Petersburg.

The Chancellor of the Empire, with whom he had already the best understanding, received him with kind cordiality. Still he did not hide from him the difficulties of the situation. From the beginning of the war, the Emperor had engaged himself with the King of Prussia to observe the strictest neutrality; always subordinate to that of Austria, for, in case of Austria declaring against Prussia, the latter might count upon the aid of Russia. This double engagement did not appear to be the result of a regular treaty; it reposed simply upon the Sovereign's word, and was so much the more obligatory. Nevertheless, it was far from being approved by all who surrounded the Czar. In his own family there were zealous partisans of France. In the country these were also both numerous and devoted. The Emperor had therefore put himself in opposition to public opinion, which was generally unfavourable to the Germans. He was therefore placed in some difficulty; but he was bound by his promise, and by the respect he bore to his uncle.

M. Thiers brought to bear all the resources of his mind in making use of the very feeble advantages that were to be drawn from this state of affairs. The Emperor received him with marvellous kindness, spoke with effusion of his ardent desire to put an end to the war. He added that he should regard with pain any diminution of territory imposed on us by

Prussia, and said most distinctly that he would not sign a treaty which should stipulate it. He did not seem to incline to the idea of a collective action of the various powers, and preferred to exercise a direct influence by addressing himself to King William. M. Thiers opposed this opinion respectfully; he had no difficulty in showing the inevitable trouble to which Russia exposed herself in tolerating the aggrandizement of Prussia; he reminded him of the noble part played by the Emperor of Russia in 1814, and the happy consequences of that policy in reconciling the two nations. The future reserved for Europe formidable trials. It was worthy of a powerful sovereign to lessen them by destroying in its germs the fatal hatred which the continuation of hostilities would produce as well as the severe conditions of peace.

He insisted still more forcibly with Prince Gortschakoff. He proved to him that Russia could not remain inactive without incurring a dangerous responsibility. "Since you desire the end of the struggle," said he, "and in that you only obey your own interest, you ought to take measures to put an end to it. France has been repulsed by unacceptable conditions, she cannot directly make a second advance; it belongs to the other powers to interpose; all desire it, but they recognise at the same time that they can do nothing without you. Everything therefore depends on your decision; your interest and honour both dictate that which will lead to a durable peace."

The Chancellor would have been glad to have escaped from this; but while M. Thiers was pressing him, England addressed to him some considerations which were but the echo of the energetic language of our Ministers, urged on by my instructions and those of M. de Chaudordy.

The latter wrote to our ambassador in London:—

"Yesterday I wrote to beg you to call the attention of your Secretary of State to the importance of giving to the Government of the National Defence the moral concurrence which would result from the official recognition of England. To-day I go further, on account of instructions received from M. Jules Favre. It must be recognised that the circumstances are too grave for a purely moral concurrence to suffice. It

seems that the moment has come for all Europe, and particularly the great powers, to make themselves heard. The Government of the National Defence is of opinion that the time has come for them to put clearly defined questions. Prussian no longer threatens France alone; the cessions of territory by conquest which she exacts from us are only the prelude of what she will soon demand from other States. Led on by the exaggerated sentiment of her national pretensions, she will change the face of Europe; and if her requirements are not opposed by a common understanding, renewed wars must be expected, which will long adjourn all hope of peace, civilisation, and prosperity. I have spoken of this to Lord Lyons. Will you communicate with the Secretary of State, showing him that it is in the name of the French Government that these opinions are sent to you?"

The same day our ambassador sent from London the following despatch, which deserves to be quoted entire:—

"An agitation in favour of France and peace is taking place at present in London and the principal towns of England. Meetings have already been held, others are announced, and all these manifestations either place or will place the Prime Minister under the necessity of taking an attitude more conformable to the public opinion of England.

"Mr. Gladstone, it seems, regrets the contradiction existing between our assertions and those of the Cabinet of Berlin as to the conditions named by Count Bismarck.[1] Mr. Gladstone seems likewise to regret that the adjournment of the elections has delayed the definitive constitution of the French Government. There is in that, said the First Lord of the Treasury, an obstacle to our action. Mr. Gladstone added that there were, no doubt, good reasons for deferring so important a measure. Mr. Gladstone expressed himself in very definite terms on the attitude of the Emperor at Sedan and Wilhelmshöhe, and particularly blamed that weakness and selfishness which prompted the author of the war to cast the responsibility of

[1] I think I have dispelled this apparent contradiction in replying by my circular of October 17th, to that of Count Bismarck of the 27th September. This is mentioned a little further on. The two circulars will be found in the Pièces Justificatives.

it upon the country. Alluding to the hopes of the deposed dynasty, Mr. Gladstone expressed his conviction that its restoration was impossible, although Prussia has believed herself able to threaten France with it. 'But,' added he, 'this is my private opinion.' I do not think it useless to state in passing, that Lord Granville expressed himself in the same manner in a late conversation I have had with him. Returning to the conditions of peace, Mr. Gladstone opposed ardently the cession of part of our fleet. His interlocutor having designedly insisted on the possibility of such an exaction, upon the clearly-defined intention of Prussia to develop her maritime forces, and on her probable intention of taking possession of the Mediterranean as soon as possible, by the acquisition of the Austrian ports, and especially of Trieste, which she has always considered a German port, the First Lord of the Treasury rejected the idea of such issues as inadmissible, and impossible to be accepted."

If England was in a state of agitation, Austria was far from unmoved, and in the early part of October Count Beust expressed this opinion: "That a common understanding between the neutrals was desirable; that Austria could not take the initiative, on account of her peculiar position; but that England and Russia would do well to take the lead."

This fact is mentioned in a despatch from Lord Granville to Lord Blomfield, of the 10th of October 1870 (Blue-Book, No. 188, p. 136).[1] The English Minister therein declares, "That up to the present no circumstance has taken place to change his opinion upon the inopportuneness of an offer of mediation. The declarations of Count Bismarck and M. Jules Favre present no starting-point for negotiations; at the same time, while fearing that counsels of moderation would remain ineffectual, Lord Granville is ready to examine any proposition of the Austrian Government having a definite object."

Thus pressed, the Cabinet of Vienna takes refuge naturally in the dilatory policy, of which England gave the example. Lord Granville proves this in his despatch of the 12th October to Lord Blomfield (Blue-Book, No. 199, p. 143):—

[1] I borrow this quotation, and those which follow, from an extract from the Blue-Book, which was made for me at the Foreign Office.

"Lord Granville acknowledges a communication from Count Apponyi relative to the request for an active support formed by the Count of Mosbourg with Count Beust. The Austrian Chancellor has several times exposed the motives which deter the Austro-Hungarian monarchy from taking the initiative in an intervention, and these motives were understood by M. Jules Favre and M. Thiers. Austria regrets the torpor into which Europe has fallen in the presence of the war, and she would willingly unite in the efforts of England and Russia for the restoration of peace, in the confidence that an understanding between the neutral powers, with respect to an interposition, would exercise a salutary influence."

It was, then, England which stopped the movement of the Cabinet of Vienna, and considered, for the moment at least, the intervention of the neutrals to be inopportune. Nevertheless, she did not intend to remain altogether inactive; she sounded Russia, to try and act in concert with her. It is from the Blue-Book that we learn this (No. 202, p. 146, 16th October 1870): —"Lord Granville, in informing Sir A. Buchanan that he has reasons for believing that the French Government would consent to the dismantling of Metz and Strasbourg, invites him to ask confidentially of Prince Gortschakoff whether he thinks that England and Russia could come to an understanding upon the conditions of peace, and if, in case of the affirmative, the two powers could not interpose, together with the other neutral powers, for obtaining the cessation of the siege of Paris."

This time it is Russia that rejects the proposition as inopportune. "Sir A. Buchanan informs Lord Granville of this by a despatch of October 17th (Blue-Book, No. 226, p. 170).

"Sir A. Buchanan reports a conversation with Prince Gortschakoff. Russia is not of opinion that a confidential understanding between England and herself, upon conditions of peace, could have a useful result, for there is no reason for thinking that Prussia will depart from the exactions mentioned in M. de Bismarck's circular. The Emperor Alexander has gone further than others, for he has written to King William, to express his hope that he would not require the annexation of any portion of French territory; but the King replied that he could not refuse the unanimous desire of Germany to obtain better

guarantees for the frontier. Prince Gortschakoff thinks that individual attempts would be preferable to a collective action, which might take a threatening character."

Thus, after Sedan, the clearly defined intention of Prussia was to despoil France, and the no less firm intention of France was to resist this spoliation. The King and his Ministers could not have opposed the desire of the nation. The Government of the National Defence, on the other hand, could not have ceded one part of French soil in order to redeem another. On all sides the people would have risen against it, if they had believed it capable of such an intention. But while the King and Count Bismarck obeyed a restraint put upon them by public passion, without hiding from themselves the misfortune they were preparing for their descendants, in forcibly taking possession of populations which repelled them, the Government of the National Defence united itself, unhesitatingly, and without reserve, to the opinion of France, which would have considered itself dishonoured if it had not fought to the last to save from foreign servitude those of its children who were threatened by the exactions of the conqueror. I acknowledge therefore, with Lord Granville and Prince Gortschakoff, that our obstinacy, like that of Prussia, was the obstacle to peace. Only, ours arose from a sense of duty and justice, while that of Prussia arose from self-interest and a love of power. Our obstinacy gained for us the sympathies of the world; it is our consolation and our hope: that of Prussia has been blamed by all the powers; and I do not think I go too far when I say, that henceforth it will become for her the subject of a legitimate disquietude.

Such was the opinion of Europe at the time when the Emperor of Russia took a step in favour of the integrity of our territory, for which we must be grateful, although it was without any result.

M. Thiers invoked this opinion with great authority, and the Chancellor of the Emperor found it difficult not to give him a fresh pledge. Unable to end the debate as he hoped, he tried to solve the difficulty by a measure which bound nobody. An armistice had this character; we had requested it at Ferrières, before Paris had been invested. Now that it was invested, Prussia needed no guarantees; they were the results of the

hermetical blockade which was established. It was therefore to be hoped that she would raise no objection; and that, on its side, the French Government would accept a proposition which was only the reproduction of the one which it had made.

M. Thiers could not receive this proposal of Prince Gortschakoff otherwise than favourably. It was agreed upon between them that, if he gained the concurrence of the other neutral powers, M. Thiers only needed to send a signal from Tours, whither he was about to return; immediately the Emperor would address himself to King William; and if, as he expected, Prussia accepted, she would send to M. Thiers a safe-conduct for Paris, to take instructions from the Government, before conferring directly with Count Bismarck.

On the 18th of October the English ambassador informed Lord Granville of this in the following terms (Blue-Book, No. 227, p. 170):—"Prince Gortschakoff has received orders from the Emperor his master. An understanding between the neutrals would be a futile effort, with no practical result. It would be desirable for the English Government to use its influence with the French Government to obtain its consent to an armistice, and the convention of a National Assembly—an armistice which might be obtained from Prussia by means of some slight concessions, which should include the suspension of hostilities around Paris, only maintaining the investment."

The 20th October Lord Granville charged Lord Loftus (Blue-Book, No. 216, p. 159) to communicate directly to Count Bismarck "a despatch, demanding that before taking the rigorous measures of war with regard to Paris, Prussia would make a fresh effort to arrange with the French Government the terms for an armistice, allowing the convocation of the National Assembly."

The same day (Blue-Book, No. 218, p. 161) he asks Lord Lyons to urge the French Government's acceptance of this.

The proposition conceived in these terms could not meet with a refusal on our part. It was, in fact, question of an armistice, with the usual conditions, and that of the election, without restriction, of a National Assembly. This was precisely what I asked at Ferrières, and that which Count Bismarck's exactions had made impossible. It was this which I had again formulated, when General Burnside came voluntarily to offer his per-

sonal mediation for putting an end to the effusion of blood. And since I mention this incident, it is as well not to leave out any essential detail.

On the 1st of October, in the evening, the Minister of the United States sent me word that an American General was coming from the Prussian head-quarters, bearing a letter addressed to me by Count Bismarck. I wrote immediately to General Trochu, who sent an officer to Sèvres, with a safe-conduct, and the order to stop the fire. The next morning, at nine o'clock, I went to M. Washburn's residence, where I found two personages, who were introduced to me. One of them was Colonel Forbes, who had long lived in France; the other was General Burnside, who played an important part in the war of secession. These gentlemen began a general conversation, in which they informed me that they were only travellers, drawn towards France by the grand spectacle offered by the war; that they had been to the Prussian head-quarters, where they had friends, and that Count Bismarck, knowing they desired to visit Paris, had begged them to bring a letter to me. They gave me this letter, without asking me to open it in their presence, and without appearing to know its contents. They added that they should depart the same day; that before starting they would see General Trochu, and would do me the honour of coming to take leave of me at the "Ministère." Count Bismarck's letter, which I read on leaving them, was the reply to a communication which I had sent him some days before, in the name of the Foreign Ministers who had remained at Paris. Count Bismarck maintained his avowed intention of only sending them opened letters, and of opening all those which should be sent to them, alleging as an excuse for a procedure so contrary to the rights of men, and so injurious for the members of the diplomatic body, that the latter could easily avoid this inconvenience by joining the delegation of Tours, quitting *a fortress* necessarily submitted to the laws of war. The letter referred to no other subject.

I went directly to show it to General Trochu, and to announce the visit of the two foreigners. They came at eleven o'clock, were gracious and courteous, heard from the General the most

firm declarations concerning the defence of Paris; and retired without having made any proposition.

They were rather more explicit with me; and after the first salutations, they said that, as Americans sympathizing with France, touched by her misfortunes, they had desired, in coming to Paris, to seek some means of bringing about a reconciliation. They repeated that their visit was in no way official, that they had not conversed with Count Bismarck, but that still they thought that an armistice, for the purpose of treating for peace, might be accepted.

I replied that such was my most earnest desire; that I had proved this by going to the Prussian head-quarters in spite of my natural feelings. I had proposed an armistice not to treat for peace, for the Government of the National Defence had not the right to conclude one, but to convoke an Assembly freely elected, which alone had this right. I added that this proposal had been without result, because Prussia had made it depend upon conditions which were inadmissible; but that I was ready to repeat it; that I regarded it as an honour to my country, and that I was particularly glad to see two citizens of free America, with no other mandate but that of friendship for France, interposing, with the hope of putting an end to a struggle which henceforth could have no other object than our humiliation and destruction; that, although determined to resist, we were no less decided to neglect no opportunity of coming to an honourable agreement.

My interlocutors heard me attentively. They asked if I authorized them to report my words to Count Bismarck. I begged them to do so. "Perhaps," said they, in taking leave, "our business may bring us back to Paris." I assured them that we should be most happy to see them. They then departed.

It was difficult to believe that Count Bismarck was entirely ignorant of this transaction. Thus we were not surprised eight days after, on Sunday, October 9th, to see again General Burnside and Colonel Forbes; they reported Count Bismarck's reply. A regular armistice appeared to him impossible; but he adopted the idea of the election and convocation of an Assembly. He offered a sort of truce of forty-eight hours, during which delegates or candidates might be allowed to pass. We could then arrange

for the meeting of the Assembly. The elections would take place in the occupied departments, except in Alsace and Lorraine.

I desired that General Trochu should be present during this conversation. We announced all the details of it to the Government, who thought with us, that this vague and inconsistent proposition could not be accepted. It placed the elections at the mercy of the enemy; it gave the electors no means of voting deliberately. It was agreed that I should draw up a summary of the conditions we had the right to claim: an armistice of a fortnight, with revictualling; election of deputies in all the departments. I read this to General Burnside and Colonel Forbes, in the presence of M. Washburn and General Trochu. I then gave it to General Burnside, who promised to give it to Count Bismarck.[1]

Such was this attempt at negotiation, of which I never knew the exact starting-point. I believe it must be traced entirely to the noble sentiment of the illustrious General who took the responsibility of it; and that in seeming to encourage it, Count Bismarck only meant to perform a simple act of sterile condescension. He would have acted differently if he had sought a serious result; he would have given to the intermedium a precise basis for preliminary arrangements; he would have taken the trouble to reply to the note communicated to him from the French Government. We thought that then, as at Ferrières, diplomacy, ruled by military command, wished to appear to do something in the cause of peace, but that, in truth, it allowed military efforts to do their best, hoping that Paris, disturbed by seditions, impatiently enduring the sufferings of the siege, would not be slow in surrendering. The events I am about to relate appear to justify this opinion only too strongly.

Nevertheless, Prussia could not evade the opinion of Europe so easily as the interposition of General Burnside; and Europe, represented by the neutral powers, was about to claim a truce. After having come to an understanding with Prince Gortschakoff, M. Thiers had quitted Petersburg. He had stayed some days at Vienna, in order to confer with Count Beust and to present his respects to the Emperor. Thence he proceeded to

[1] See Pièces Justificatives.

Florence, where, in spite of the good-will of the King, he had not been able to obtain from the Italian Ministers an armed mediation, of which he had traced the plan. The Cabinet remained inflexible, and M. Thiers returned to Tours on the 20th of October, after having in a few weeks traversed a great part of Europe, and earned a title to the gratitude of his country by his indefatigable devotion.

We did not hear any correct account of the result of his journey. I knew from the reports of M. de Chaudordy that it had not been altogether sterile, and that at his arrival he was to receive communications from St. Petersburg. My anxiety may be guessed. I wrote to M. de Chaudordy on the 19th of October:—"If your calculations are correct M. Thiers is with you. You do not tell me what is to be the purport of the communication he is expecting from the north, and which might permit me to confer with him. You know my intentions. You know that I shall never accept a cession of territory, even disguised. Much has been said of neutralizing Alsace; it must not be hoped that France would accept such an arrangement. It would be admissible to a certain point, if Prussia were Switzerland; even then, the man who should support it in Paris would be overthrown on the morrow. The Government considers itself the faithful interpreter of opinion in energetically opposing an equivocal peace. If we have not yet fatigued our enemy, we have arrested and perplexed him. Our courage is raised, our army is becoming accustomed to war, our materials are being completed, at the end of the month we shall have a formidable artillery. But this would not prevent me from accepting an armistice to-morrow, provided that it were on just terms, applying to all parts of the army, and permitting revictualling; still more readily would I accept a mediation, for that would mean peace—in short, if an inch of territory must be abandoned, no negotiation; with the integrity of the territory, all is possible."

Two days after, on the 15th of October, I repeated the same ideas, and I leave it to be inferred that the intervention of Europe might have determined us to give solid guarantees of peace to Prussia. I wrote:—

"In spite of her words, Europe is still inert. I can only wait for M. Thiers, whose activity and courage I admire. I shall be

very happy to see him again, and to confer with him. Shut up as we are, we have a difficulty in judging of what is going on at a distance. England requires to prove her influence in the world by a firmer attitude. If she will she can. In the present state of things Europe can impose her mediation; Russia and England, acting with firmness, can bring about an armistice, and, by that means, peace. We have said: 'Not an inch of soil, not a stone of our fortresses.' We have not modified our programme. Nevertheless, in receiving the concurrence of Europe for the definitive re-establishment of peace, we would accept as legitimatized by circumstances any guarantees given to Prussia. The best guarantee, in my opinion, is in our well-defined resolution of renouncing a policy of conquest and diplomatic turbulence. And when I speak of our resolution, I mean that of France, whose opinion does not appear to me doubtful. The lesson she is now receiving is severe enough; she will profit by it. If a province is forced from her, she is condemned to a warlike policy until she regains it; if her territory is left, she will enter upon a peaceful one. If Europe will prepare an armistice, we shall accept her overtures with gratitude."

Upon arriving at Tours, M. Thiers found all favourable to an armistice. He was able to encourage the English ambassador to urge upon the neutral powers their consent as soon as possible; this is expressed by Lord Lyons in his despatch to Lord Granville on the 22d of October (Blue-Book, No. 231, p. 180). Reporting his conversations with M. de Chaudordy and M. Thiers, Lord Lyons wrote: "The French Government cannot itself renew its overtures to Prussia, but it is grateful for the endeavours of England. M. Thiers recommends that all premature discussion upon the conditions of peace be set aside, and that we confine ourselves to asking a suspension of arms, leaving at its expiration the military *statu quo* at the same point as at the commencement. He thinks he could enlighten the Government of Paris upon the dispositions of Europe, and upon the real military situation of France." On the 24th of October, there was another despatch from Lord Lyons to Lord Granville, announcing the adhesion of the neutrals (Blue-Book, No. 240, p. 187):—

"The representatives of Austria, of Italy, and Russia, have

informed us that their Governments were disposed to support the efforts of England in bringing about an armistice. The Count of Chaudordy insists that the French Government can give no assurance relative to conditions of peace, but must leave the discussion of these conditions to the future National Assembly. The convention of the armistice must therefore be strictly limited to military questions."

These points being agreed upon, Lord Granville wrote on the 25th of October to the Count de Bernstorft, to tell him that the French Government was disposed to accept the armistice, and on the 27th he asked a safe-conduct for M. Thiers to allow him to come and confer with us at Paris before negotiating with Count Bismarck. The Prussian Cabinet recognised the justice of this demand, and sent him a safe-conduct accordingly.

But before consulting with the foreign Ministers upon these things, M. Thiers had taken the advice of the delegation at Tours, to whom he had expressed his views. The deliberation was lengthy, and ended in a vote, of which M. Gambetta informed me by a letter on the 24th of October.

"Three questions," wrote he, "have been examined:

"First, Ought M. Thiers to be authorized to return to Paris? There was unanimity upon this point, with this reserve, that M. Thiers should not pass by the Prussian head-quarters.

"Secondly, What was to be thought of the proposition for an armistice? We were of opinion that M. Thiers should transmit it to you, making its acceptance depend on being at least of twenty-five days' duration, and that liberty of revictualling should be accorded.

"Our interest in this is too evident to remark upon it.

"Thirdly, Must the elections take place? You will see by the verbal process which M. Thiers will put into your hands, that my three colleagues voted in the affirmative, while I pronounced myself for the negative, for reasons mentioned above; and you know now on what conditious I considered the elections as favourable.

"I ought to add here that in pronouncing myself for the negative, I did not for a moment forget the opinion of Paris, so unanimous at my departure, and which must have been only strengthened by events which have since taken place."

The reasons which had determined M. Gambetta to vote against the convocation of an Assembly, as well as the conditions under which the elections seemed to him dangerous, are now known by everybody. None can reproach M. Gambetta with having wanted to hide them, or with having changed his opinion.

Upon his arrival at Tours, he said to me: "After having inquired of most of the prefects, and studied their declarations, I discovered a unanimous disapprobation of the general elections, whose approach only served to excite the division of parties. The decision of the Government of Paris was well received, and there now remains but one thought, that of war."

In expressing himself thus, M. Gambetta was certainly sincere; but, as he said himself, he was in complete opposition to his colleagues, to M. de Chaudordy, to M. Thiers. Besides, he did not sufficiently consider that, in the opinion of England and Russia, the proposition of an armistice was essentially associated with the convocation of an Assembly; so much so, that to suppress this convocation was to render the armistice impossible. But M. Gambetta was influenced by the conviction that the demand for elections was the work of a party, and that in subscribing to it we should have fatally weakened the power of resistance. He clearly expressed himself on this subject in his letter:—

"In spite of the respect I owe to my colleagues, and to M. Thiers, I must persist in my opinion, that the elections are only desired by a minority in the country. We must remember that the conservative party, save two or three ultra-moderate individuals, is unanimous in regarding the elections as a perilous diversion from the necessities of the war."

As for the conditions, without which M. Gambetta considered the elections as likely to cause the ruin of the country, they were the same that he tried to impose in the month of February following. It was with him a clearly defined idea; he had spoken of it to me at Paris, and I was not able to disengage his mind from it. He repeated it with increasing energy. He said, "And yet it is right to allow that the constitution of an Assembly representing France freely and completely, and sitting in Paris, would have a real power over

opinion generally. It is from this point of view alone that we must judge the proposition which has been made us for the armistice. If this, by its duration and conditions, permit, at the same time, the revictualling of all the besieged towns, and the convocation of all the electors, democratic opinion may agree to it, under the formal reserve of exclusion from the Assembly of all the former Ministers of Napoleon III. since the foundation of the Empire, of the Senators, Councillors of State, and of all those who have been official candidates since 1852. There must be a law which shall declare null and void any electoral operation bearing on any individual included in the above category. Such an arrangement is required by both justice and policy. It is, in fact, just that all the accomplices and flatterers of the administration which has ruined France should be set aside, together with the dynasty of which they were the guilty tools. This is a necessary sanction of the Revolution of September 4th. It is also politic, after we have, during two months, sacrificed everything to the supreme interest of the Defence, not to give our work into the hands of our most cruel enemies, and to keep out of the first Assembly of the Republic all those who by their past are interested in conspiring for its fall. I dare assert that, without this precaution, the general elections will be equivalent to a renunciation of the republican party; and I must say that, for myself, I should find it impossible to admit them, and to urge them forward. I have expressed these ideas to M. Thiers, who has promised to report them."

I did not wish to delay until M. Thiers's arrival the refutation of what I regarded as dangerous errors. I replied to M. Gambetta, on the 28th of October:—"I received last night your despatch of the 24th. I read it to the Government. We have no news from M. Thiers, and we await him for the examination and resolution of the grave questions you propose. How, in effect, can we reason about an armistice, when we neither know whence the proposition comes, nor what it is? But you point out a difficulty, which can at once be resolved, and upon which I can see no doubt. If the elections are possible, they ought to take place. I have clearly expressed myself with regard to this. I have requested a truce for a

month, with a proportional revictualling, complete liberty for circulation and voting, the vote of Alsace and Lorraine, and meeting of the Assembly at Paris. I do not believe that these conditions will be granted; I therefore regard the armistice as very improbable. If it were accorded, if it rendered the elections possible, must we strike the categories of persons you name with ineligibility? I should regard such a measure as suicide. It would be, truly, the denial of all our principles; an official candidature by means of exclusion would be a formal avowal of our powerlessness. We only exist by and for the sake of the sovereignty of the people. If they choose to give themselves up to the man of Sedan, we should have but one duty, that of abandoning so cowardly a country. But we have no right to put obstacles in the way of free suffrage. To interdict a certain choice is to make a choice for the country, and to avow ourselves in opposition to it. Now there are two alternatives,—either it is with us or against us. In the first case, we have no cause for disquietude as regards Bonapartist candidatures; in the second, we cannot forbid them. If this ostracism is condemned by principle, it is so also by facts. If any former official candidates come forward and are nominated, their place will be untenable. There will be strong reasons for persevering in the Republic. But I believe them to be much discredited. Nominated at the time of such a catastrophe as that which is now overwhelming us, they would be crushed beforehand. I fear them but little, while I should regard any measure which should exclude them as a death-blow to our policy. Let opinion have its way; let us bind it by our services, our moderation, our passionate love of our country, we shall have nothing to fear from those tools of a tyranny which has fallen, covered with disgrace and blood. I tell you my opinion clearly and firmly; it seems to be that of almost all my colleagues here, although the late hour prevented our discussing the question as it deserved. Do not therefore engage yourself to the course you propose, firstly, because it is very probable that cannons will replace the voting-boxes, and also because the Government is of an opinion entirely opposed to your own."

The turn that the negotiation was unfortunately about to

take was to render these reflections useless. They did not, as the future proved, serve to convince M. Gambetta. We both adhered to our opinion; but it is not that of M. Gambetta which the country decided on by her vote.

The journey of M. Thiers from Tours to Paris was painful and cruel. Obliged to advance very slowly among the assembled soldiers which formed our army of the Loire, he then passed the enemy's troops, which he met just above Blois; he thus had time to observe, and his patriotic heart swelled with pain at the aspect of the desolation of our country, and the strength of the enemy. He was struck with the courage and ardour of our recruits. These poor young men, taken from the plough or the workshop, badly clothed, badly equipped, badly fed, encamped in the midst of the mud, showed an admirable self-sacrifice. They only asked to fight, and the illustrious traveller was more than once moved to tears by the devotion with which they accepted their miseries. Among the Prussians, everything was different. The good order, discipline, and health of the troops were remarkable; the spirit of obedience effaced all sadness and disquietude, and it was only in moments of surprise that the desire for peace, which filled all their hearts, could be guessed. M. Thiers received everywhere the most respectful reception; the generals always gave him distinguished officers for his escort; they tried by every means in their power to lessen his trial. On the 29th he arrived at Versailles.

He paid a complimentary visit to Count Bismarck, who received him saying, "I know that we must not speak of business, and I will scrupulously respect this prohibition." The conversation touched only on points entirely foreign to politics, and it was agreed that the next evening M. Thiers should be conducted to the Bridge of Sèvres. It was four o'clock, and I was coming away from a meeting of the mayors of the outskirts, held at the Hôtel de Ville, when a telegram was forwarded to me announcing that M. Thiers had passed the outposts. I hastened to the Quay d'Orsay. Half an hour after I had the indescribable pleasure of welcoming back my illustrious and beloved ambassador. After having briefly recounted

to me all that he had done, all that he had obtained, he requested some hours' rest. I convoked a meeting of the Government for ten o'clock in the evening, when he was to communicate the result of his negotiations.

Here I must stop and resume the narration of the course of events in Paris, from the point at which I left them in the preceding chapter. From the first days of October, a part of the population of Paris commenced to show signs of disturbance. It was easy to recognise the secret plottings of the violent party, which, ever since the 4th of September, had watched for an opportunity of raising an insurrection. This party, whose leaders have since become so sadly celebrated, had taken for its watchword, "The re-establishment of the Commune of Paris." It called loudly for the elections; its journals were filled with invectives and calumnies against the members of the Government; and every evening in the clubs, popular orators accused them of betraying the nation by their obstinacy in retaining the power, and their laxity in the defence. The greater part of these factious ones had been nominated commanders of battalions in the National Guard, and they had the pretension to exercise their authority beyond all control. One of the most audacious, Gustave Flourens, tried to place himself in the first rank. He was the idol of Belleville; nominated by three battalions, he wanted to unite them under a single command, which would have given him the grade of colonel. To put an end to his importunity, General Trochu had given him the title of major of the rampart, which Flourens considered to be creating for him a military position superior to that of other officers. He took upon himself the right of beating the *rappel* and convoking his battalions. It was in vain that the Governor of Paris remonstrated with him; he would not listen. On the 5th of October some armed National Guards appeared in the square by the Hôtel de Ville, where they raised cries in favour of the Commune. The next day, the *Journal Officiel* published a notice against such manifestations; they could only interrupt order, and disturb the defence, and encourage the enemy.

"These meetings," said an official notice, "have the double evil of taking place without the order of the superior commander,

without the order of the Minister of the Interior, the only authorities competent to dispose the military force of the city, and, what is more grave, they give to Paris an appearance of sedition as contrary to reality as favourable to the designs of the enemy.

"The enemy, let it be well understood, is at a stand-still before Paris, perplexed by a resistance upon which it had not counted. It knows that the capital may hold it at bay during long months, and also that an attack of mere force against the city is impossible. Its only hope at this moment is in our discords: our first duty is therefore to avoid even the appearance of this. Armed manifestations are destructive of all order, all discipline, however well-intentioned they may be. The Government is expressing the opinion of the immense majority of the citizens, in declaring that such manifestations must not take place again."

These remarks were very wise, but the material force to make them prevail in case of resistance was wanting. Such was our position during the entire siege; what we did obtain was only due to moral authority. Where that would not succeed, we had no power, and as that even was continually attacked, and as we would neither engage in civil war nor suppress liberty we were subject to the fluctuations of opinion, and thus were in a position to guess them. Now, in the crisis we were entering upon, we had to take one of the courses indicated by two currents equally violent: proceed to the municipal elections, or decree their adjournment. The partisans of the former opinion invoked principles, but they did not hide their design of seizing the reins of power. According to them, safety lay in revolutionary measures; the most efficacious was the dictature of the Commune of Paris. This alone possessed the energy necessary to the defence; it alone would rouse the people, and increase the resources a hundred-fold; and would fill traitors and cowards with fear.

It was precisely this continual appeal to violence which gave weight to the arguments of those who called for the adjournment of the elections. They thought that nothing was more dangerous than to weaken the defence by these party divisions; that it would be no less fatal to create, in the face of the

Government, a rival authority destined to supplant it. It would have been certain anarchy, which the enemy was expecting, and which he would not fail to take advantage of.

The Government believed the latter opinion to be that of the immense majority of Paris. It decided upon an adjournment. The *Journal Officiel* of the 8th of October announced its resolution in the following terms:—

"The Government had thought it opportune and conformable to its principles to proceed to the municipal elections in Paris. But since this resolution has been taken, the situation having been altered by the investment of the capital, it became evident that elections taking place under the Prussian cannon would be dangerous to the Republic. Everything ought to give place to the accomplishment of military duties, and to the imperious necessity of concord. The elections are therefore necessarily adjourned.

"Moreover, in the presence of the threats which the Government has received, and which it still receives, from the armed National Guards, its duty is to make its dignity respected as well as the power intrusted to it by the people.

"Consequently, being convinced that the elections would be dangerous to the defence, the Government has adjourned them until the end of the siege."

The same number of the *Officiel* contained the decree which appointed M. Gambetta to join the delegation of Tours, and confided to the Minister of Foreign Affairs the office of Minister of the Interior during the interim. The decree was preceded by the following preamble:—

"Considering that, on account of the lengthened investment of Paris, it is indispensable for the Minister of the Interior to be in direct communication with the departments, and to put these in communication with Paris, in order to bring about an energetic defence by their concurrence." . . . .

Then, after announcing that M. Gambetta had left that morning, there followed the following proclamation, to be sent to the departments:—

"Frenchmen,—The population of Paris at this moment offers a unique spectacle to the world: that of a city containing 2,000,000 souls, invested on every side, deprived until now of

all help from an army—thanks to the criminal negligence of the Empire—and which accepts with courage and serenity all the horrors of a siege.

"The enemy had not reckoned upon this; he hoped to find Paris without defence: the capital is revealed surrounded with formidable fortifications; and, what is better, defended by 400,000 citizens, who are ready to sacrifice their life.

"The enemy expected to find Paris a prey to anarchy; it looked for sedition, a sedition which leads astray and depraves, and which, more surely than cannon, would give up the besieged places into the hands of the enemy.

"This is what he will continue to hope for. United, armed, provisioned, resolute, full of faith in the fortune of France, the Parisians know that it only depends on them, on their good order, their patience, to arrest the progress of the invaders during long months.

"Frenchmen,—It is for the country, for her glory, for her future, that the population of Paris confronts the steel and fire of the foreigners.

"You who have already given us your sons, you who have sent us that valiant Garde Mobile, whose ardour and exploits each day only serves to declare, rise *en masse* and come to us. Isolated, we can save our honour; but with you and through you we will swear to save France."

These measures, which were claimed by public opinion, were received by the greater number of the inhabitants of Paris with the greatest satisfaction. But the revolutionary leaders, who only sought an opportunity for a disturbance, stigmatized them as violations of the rights of citizens. The adjournment of the elections was a usurpation, the departure of the Minister of the Interior was a flight. The Government was betraying the city; the Commune of Paris alone could rescue it. The National Guards were invited by placards to assemble upon the Square of the Hôtel de Ville, for the purpose of demanding the election of the Commune.

From 300 to 400 men obeyed this summons, and were soon joined by a crowd of onlookers. Cries of "Vive la Commune" arose from the midst of these groups, among whom some bolder than the rest spoke of attacking and invading the Hôtel de Ville.

By two o'clock the demonstration became threatening, when the 80th Battalion of the National Guard, led by its commander, M. Bixio, came and formed a line along the palisades, and then in a square along the "Place," so as to isolate the agitators. Frightened by this manœuvre, the greater part disappeared. Nevertheless, the report had soon spread in the town that the Government was assailed by the rebels. The National Guard hastened to the spot; at four o'clock more than 10,000 men were assembled, placing themselves at the service of the Government. We passed them in review; the warmest cheers saluted us. I addressed a few words to the officers, and order was completely restored.[1]

The attempt of the factions had failed; and, as generally happens in such cases, it had caused that hostility to burst forth, with which they were regarded. Almost all the battalions protested against the manifestation of the 8th by sympathetic addresses to the Government, to which they attested their gratitude for having prevented party quarrels by adjourning the elections. Proceedings were commenced against Flourens, who, without order, had commanded the *rappel* to be beaten, and had convoked his battalions. Unhappily, these acts of the Government were paralysed by those who were charged with their execution. Public opinion supported the Government, but did not want rigorous punishment to be used. An orator of the club had voted the expropriation of a large manufacturer. The verbal process of this monstrous resolution was published in a demagogical journal. We demanded the pursuit and arrest of the guilty persons; the court caused them to be set at liberty, considering that such a deed did not fall under power of penal repression. A journalist had posted up at the windows of the "kiosques," where newspapers are sold, and consequently on the public way, a prospectus containing false news. This was a real provocation to disorder; the Prefect of the Police arrested the man. There was a universal cry of indignation; throughout the press the Government was accused of barbarity. The magistrates shared in this opinion. An order was given forbidding proceedings to be taken. By a strange contradiction, Paris was wanting a des-

[1] See the Pièces Justificatives.

perate defence; but at the same time it wanted to destroy those who directed it. It submitted to the tyrannical rule of requisitions; but it opposed, as offensive to liberty, laws which punish scandal and calumny. It consoled itself for the privations it endured, by opposition to discipline; and to the end it believed that if it had been able to govern the military operations, it would infallibly have defeated the Prussians.

General Trochu knew these dispositions; he was grieved, but not disturbed by them. He often told us that no historical precedent could give any idea of a siege supported under such conditions. It was not only the vast extent of the circle over which the enemy had the power of hourly changing his point of attack, which constituted the most formidable part of its novelty; it was, above all, the character of the defence, in which the military element, that in such a case ought to be sovereign, was, on the contrary, necessarily subordinate. To hold back and repulse the besieger without an army of succour —without a garrison, properly so called—was of itself an almost insurmountable difficulty; but this was nothing to that of the necessity of mastering and arranging the political factions which penetrated the most numerous and restless part of the public force. It was not, therefore, the assailant only that had to be taken into account, but the besieged—their errors, their passions, their mad impatience, their mistrust, their sudden changes of opinion—the whole being incessantly excited by journals and seditious clubs, which could not be dealt with without rousing the populace, even that part which was the most moderate. "I know," said the General to us, "the extent of the requirements of the mob; my duty is to resist them. My responsibility gives me the right to do this, even if my conscience did not command it. If I followed the advice of the best authorized persons, I should land in chaos; if I allowed myself to be led by public opinion, I should sacrifice thousands of lives, and run the risk of causing the fall of Paris in a few days. The popularity I still possess can only be used to prevent the evil, and I employ all my strength to this end. But I should blush to keep it by conceding to popular caprice. I am prepared for a considerable effort; in order that it may be as successful as it will be de-

cisive, I need some weeks still; until then I shall remain inflexible."

These ideas, which I repeat but imperfectly, were given before the Government with a rare talent of speech; and although, in council, the General often made too free use of harangues, his tone was so decided, his attitude so proud and frank, his speeches so full of nobility and honour, that he never met with any to contradict him. Besides, as military leader, he was the master; he might have acted without attempting to convince us, but he took the trouble to do so, and he succeeded. We were all full of confidence in him; he seemed every day further removed from those fears of unsuccess which, perhaps, he had not sufficiently hidden at the commencement; and, while we gave ourselves entirely to the heavy task of feeding, calming, and sustaining Paris, of maintaining order, of clothing and equipping the National Guard, we left to the General the military direction, which he alone was capable of conducting with perfect competence.

I allowed myself, nevertheless, to submit to him those reflections which resulted from my own observations and from what I gathered from military men. I should have desired more frequent engagements, and, principally upon one or two points, a constant operation which might gradually have put us in possession of positions, becoming in their turn a basis of attack further in advance. I never ceased to ask him to make more use of the National Guard. They loudly claimed the honour of confronting the peril: it was difficult longer to refuse it to them. The mobilization was resolved upon. Having to choose between the system of voluntary enrolment and that of forced enrolment, the majority of the Council chose the former, which unhappily gave only insignificant results. We had, a little later, to reform our decree, which was a source of difficulties and delays. I however endeavoured, by detailed information,[1] to refute the objections raised in the ranks of the National Guard, where it was openly stated that those who had voluntarily engaged themselves were about to be torn from their families and incorporated with the army. In spite of my

[1] See, in the Pièces Justificatives, the letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Mayor of Paris.

explanations, the registers opened in the mayoralties only received a small number of signatures. Altogether, they did not amount to 20,000, and there was good reason for surprise at so little zeal when compared with the loud protestations of the battalions, who complained of not being sent against the enemy.

The public ardour in the fabrication of cannon was more decided, and soon degenerated into a regular passion. This inspiration was certainly excellent. It made up for the scarcity in which the Empire had left us. It opened a new way for using private industry. The special committees did their best to resist. It was necessary to yield, and General Trochu did so the more willingly that the execution of his designs allowed of the employment of a numerous artillery. He therefore accepted gratefully the offers which came from all parts. As modest as he was devoted, as indefatigable as he was resolute, the Minister of Public Works, M. Dorian, displayed the most praiseworthy activity to obtain prompt results. That excellent and worthy citizen, whose goodness was about to expose him to cruel calumnies, at that time enjoyed an immense popularity. He deserved it in every respect, by his patriotism and his virtues; but, without intending to do so, he favoured a too frequent error in these critical moments when political empiricism has so much attraction. He seemed to personify the defence, and it was continually repeated round about him, that military science was of no use but to paralyse effort; that the war could not be better conducted than by engineers and men engaged in industry. It was this theory which prevailed at Tours. I do not think that that experiment can cause any regret that it was not applied in Paris.

Besides, General Trochu and the Committee of Defence had constant recourse to the intelligent counsel of the engineers. Many among them rendered signal service, but not one thought proper to claim the command. Not one would have desired it; its responsibilities were too formidable. The Governor of Paris was under no delusion with regard to this. He saw the imperious necessity of a decisive action. After much meditation, he had arranged a plan, and to calm the anxiety which I constantly felt, and did not hide from him, he confided it to

me. This plan, which he stated at the tribune, and which I should fear to report incorrectly in quoting its details, was to pierce the enemy's lines towards Argenteuil, in order to gain Rouen by keeping on the borders of the Seine. It had the immense advantage of directly placing the army of expedition in a rich and populous district, having an easy defence. This army would advance with its flank protected by the river. If it succeeded in gaining Rouen, it would find there considerable provisions, and a stream to bear them to Paris. It could, besides, if the operation succeeded, unite with several corps; and, thus augmented, it might either place the besiegers between two fires, or make a dash towards the north, and force the enemy to retreat by harassing its rear.

This was a bold conception. It required, at the outset, a vigorous effort, which would have cost much blood; then, after that effort, an extraordinary boldness of execution. It was, in truth, impossible to fight under ordinary conditions. The army must take with it no other horses than those of the artillery. It must go without ambulances and without other food than that borne by each soldier, who would have enough for four days. They must be resigned to leave behind them their dead and wounded, and run the risk of perishing with hunger. It was not impossible; and this seemed to me the most formidable eventuality, that, after having pierced the Prussian lines, the army might be surrounded and forced to submit to annihilation or to lay down their arms. The General, to whom I expressed my opinion, could not help recognising the gravity of my objections, but they appeared to him not equal to the chances of success; and when I remarked that this success even would leave Paris in a difficult position, —"You do not consider the moral effect," said he; "in war, the prestige of a great feat of arms changes the face of fortune. Since the commencement of the campaign we have constantly met with reverses. They have discouraged the army. A victory would restore its strength; it would carry perplexity into the enemy's camp, and the siege would be raised without the National Guard having to quit the ramparts."

In speaking thus, the General's countenance beamed. His face expressed confidence, decision, the spirit of sacrifice. I

guessed the hope with which his soul was inspired, and in spite of my doubts I felt the charm. We agreed that the most profound secrecy should accompany the preparations for this enterprise. The General commissioned M. Ranc, who departed on the 15th of October by the balloon "William Tell," to communicate his plan to M. Gambetta, inviting him to take this as a basis for his operations.

On the same day, in a letter which remains justly celebrated, and which he addressed to Paris under cover of an envelope addressed to his first municipal magistrate, General Trochu explained the conditions under which the National Guard ought to be mobilized; he announced that the important and arduous task of putting the city in a state of defence was achieved. Paris was impregnable, but it could not wait indefinitely for an enemy who did not attack it. It must be met in its entrenchments. To do this with success, Paris must carefully prepare all that was necessary for the struggle, and only leave to the hazard of the combat what was impossible to be provided against by tactics and prudence. The General demanded the National Guard to be on the watch against heedless ardour, and he thus concludes:—

"In the month of July last, the French army, in all its zeal, marched through Paris amidst the cries of 'À Berlin! à Berlin!' I was far from sharing in this confidence, and, almost alone among the generals, I dared to declare to the Minister of War that I perceived in this noisy commencement of a campaign, as well as in the means employed, the elements of a great disaster. The will which I then placed in the hands of M. Ducloux, a notary at Paris, will one day prove the painful presentiments, only too well realized, with which my soul was filled. Now, amidst the excitement which prevails, I meet with difficulties analogous to those of the past. I now declare here, that, having the fullest faith in the return of fortune, which will be deserved by the noble resistance shown in the siege of Paris, I will not yield to the pressure of public impatience. Inspired by the duties which are common to all, and by responsibilities which none can share with me, I shall pursue to the end the plan I have traced out, without revealing it; and I only ask of the population of Paris, in return for my efforts,

a continuation of the confidence with which they have honoured me until now."

In spite of the violent attacks of which he was the object, the sympathy which the General inspired was not diminished. Paris learnt with satisfaction that the defence pursued a regular plan. Its only desire was to see the day when, under the command of a leader who was justly popular, she would meet and grapple with the enemy, whom, until then, they had only harassed.

The Government desired no less. The news which arrived irregularly from the provinces attested both the progress of the Germans and the formation of armies, which were about to enter into line.

I have mentioned above the despatches of the 29th of September and the 1st of October, announcing two armies,—one on the Loire, the other at Belfort. M. de Chaudordy led us to hope for succour from 60,000 Italians uniting with our troops by the valley of the Saône. "This diversion," added he, "would oblige Prussia to raise the blockade of Metz or Paris. Consequently, all would change in our favour. I shall use every effort to make this attempt succeed. If Paris holds out for a short time, I do not doubt of its success."

It is true that Orleans had been taken from us; Normandy was broken in upon by the occupation of Gisors and Magny. The danger was therefore increasing, but the reports of M. Gambetta proved to us that public opinion opposed it with a growing determination. He wrote to us on the 16th of October:—

"General Bourbaki is here, who has brought us news from Metz, where we have still 90,000 men, who, by incessant combats, continue to keep back the imposing forces which surround them. If Bazaine does not attempt a sortie, it is because he does not know where to revictual his army on the way, and Bourbaki wants to return to Metz to inform him that at Longwy there are 800,000 rations, which would allow him to venture. I have tried to send him this important intelligence by Tachard, and I have detained Bourbaki. . . .

"General Cambriels holds firm, in spite of the occupation of

Mulhouse, Belfort, and Besançon. The latter town is in a complete state of defence, and occupied by some marine artillery, well equipped. Numerous commands have also been given to the officers of the fleet. Such is the outline of the situation. I have the conviction that the unexpected prolongation of your resistance, and the military preparations which are daily becoming more formidable in the departments, disconcert the invaders, and begin to excite the sympathy of Europe. The reports of a Russian or English mediation are gaining ground. We must endeavour to weary Prussia, by exercising prudence and tenacity, and we shall force her to recognise that in prolonging the war she does not add to her chances of success; on the contrary, she is compromising the fruit of her victories."

He was no less decided on the 24th October.

"I have furnished M. Thiers," wrote he, "with positive information upon the state and position of our troops; he has been able to convince himself that men abound, and that regiments are being formed. What we lack the most are generals, and, above all, a real warrior capable of arranging and employing all the forces at our disposal. He has had an opportunity of ascertaining the real existence of an army of the Loire, of 110,000 men, well armed and equipped, under the command of a firm and vigilant general, whose efforts have until now sufficiently covered Nevers, Bourges, Vierzon, Blois, and Tours, which were thought to have been lost after the defeat of La Motterouge at Orleans. We have from Belfort to Besançon the nucleus of a second army, called the Army of the East, which, unhappily, after the capture of Strasbourg, abandoned its position in the Vosges with precipitation, but which is now in a fair way for reorganization since my journey to Besançon, and in three weeks will consist of 80,000 men.

"The western part of the country towards La Vendée is pretty well guarded by a corps of 35,000 men, supported on the right by the army of the Loire. The northern district, covered by numerous fortresses, possesses not more than 40,000 men, scattered about, at the head of whom is General Bourbaki. In short, the depots are everywhere encumbered by the formation of the fourth battalions of the last grade.

"I do not include among these the corps of the francs-

tireurs, which do so much hurt to the Prussians, and which are so much feared by them. With the command of Garibaldi in the east and Kératry in the west, they constitute a valuable resource.

"Such are our forces of the line. I do not count either the National Guards or the mobilized Guards, which are only partially employed.

"But will Paris hold out much longer?

"I do not doubt it; if we gain a month we shall be in mid-winter, and shall possess another army. Arms, which have been so difficult of acquisition, begin to arrive in large quantities. The disarmament of the squadrons gives us an important contingent of marines and artillerymen. We are daily augmenting our artillery material. Our situation, although critical, can only improve if we commit no imprudence. Therefore we must hold out. Our enemies have time against them, time which is being wasted; this explains their fresh inclination for an armistice."

The opinion thus expressed by M. Gambetta was the same as that of the inhabitants of Paris, of the members of the Government, and particularly of General Trochu. It was based, in the first place, upon what had been repeated so many times about the impossibility that the Prussians would endure a long campaign on account of the composition of their army. All the information we received authorized us to believe that they were astonished and disconcerted by our resistance. On the other hand, France seemed to be rising. We had faith in her patriotism; and when M. de Gambetta, in her name, and in harmony with Europe, begged us to hold out, we felt the resolution to fight to the end increase daily, and we were convinced that, if we discouraged the enemy, we should finish by defeating him.

Moreover, since the affray of the 8th, Paris had regained her calm and confidence. M. de Kératry, who had resigned in order to try and rouse the western provinces, had been replaced by M. Edmond Adam, whose character and devotion were a pledge of security. The 22d of October was the date for the expiration of the first term of the loan: the number of those who brought in goods was so great, that the wickets had to be

multiplied, and the *Journal Officiel* announced that, contrary to custom, they would remain open all Sunday, the 23d. The public went in crowds to the popular concerts of M. Pasdeloup, and to the conferences of M. Legouvé and M. Sarcy. This great and impressionable population was becoming familiar with danger, and, mistress of its emotions, it returned to its accustomed diversions and mental enjoyments. The applause with which the people repaid the zeal of the artistes and orators served to alleviate their moral suffering. They went more gaily to the ramparts and to the drill, without doubting that, when they had the chance of trying their strength with the Prussians, they could force them to raise the siege. The sorties of the garrison encouraged them in this hope. Our soldiers displayed in them a rare bravery; and although the generals did not permit them to keep the position gained, desiring, as they said, to confine themselves to reconnoitring, all thought these brilliant actions were the prelude of the decisive battle which General Trochu had hinted at.

On the 15th of October, the Gardes-Mobiles of Finisterre and Nord, supported by the scouts of the Seine, and some companies of the marines and of the line, engaged in battle before Bondy. The enemy was repulsed beyond the farm at Groslay, and, so lively was the action, that at half-past three the Prussians displayed the white flag, requesting to bury their dead. We had lost the brave Captain Battu, belonging to the scouts of the Seine; but our troops returned to their cantonments, encouraged by their success.

On the 21st General Ducrot engaged in a skirmish between Rueil, Malmaison, and Buzenval; and here the scouts of the Seine, the Franchetti scouts, and the National Garde-Mobile vied with the regular troops. Buzenval, the fort of Montretoul, and the farm of Fouilleuse, were brilliantly carried; a battalion of Seine-et-Marne engaged resolutely in the ravine of Saint-Cucufa, and thus saved four companies of Zouaves, who had rashly advanced in face of the enemy's fire. On the same day, between Joinville-le-Pont and Champigny, two companies—one of the National Guard, the other of Volunteer Rifles—under the orders of Captain Vresse, bravely supported the 5th foot regiment and the 7th battalion of Mobiles of La Vienne, drove the

enemy beyond Champigny, and would not turn back until the order for retreat was given by General Trepier. There were three men killed and seven wounded.

To all these episodes, which roused courage among the people, must be added the heroic defence of the little town of Chateaudun, which, on the 18th of October, being assailed by a body of 5000 Prussians, supported during nearly ten hours the destructive fire of a formidable artillery. The brave Garde-National, to which were added the francs-tireurs of Paris, had disputed the streets of the town, inch by inch, and M. Testanières, the commander, fell at its head, pierced with bullets. Half the town had been set on fire. The delegation of Tours, on hearing of this brave resistance, issued a decree declaring that the town of Chateaudun had well deserved help from the country, and voted a fund of 100,000 francs for the succour of the ruined families. The following are the considerations on which the decree was founded :—

" Considering that the little town of Chateaudun, an unfortified town, resisted heroically during nine hours, on the 18th day of October, the attack of a Prussian corps of above 5000 men, which only succeeded in occupying it after having bombarded it, set it on fire, and almost reduced it to ashes :

" Considering that in that memorable day the National Guard of Chateaudun, together with the brave francs-tireurs of Paris, particularly distinguished themselves by their energy, their constancy, and their patriotism :

" Considering that there is good reason to signalize to France, by a special decree of the Government, the noble example given by the town of Chateaudun to all towns exposed to the attacks of the enemy, and to come to the aid of the population driven from their homes by the fire and shells of the Prussians." . . .

The emotion in Paris was profound. Added to the admiration inspired by so generous a devotion was the hope that it would be imitated in all parts of the country ; and yet, in spite of the favourable indications resulting from the incomplete news we received, a vague and painful disquietude rested upon all minds. Since the 17th of August we had had no direct communication with the garrison of Metz. The information which came from Belgium represented it as being abundantly furnished with food

and ammunition. But, in reality, we were reduced to conjectures on the subject, and each day served to render this more and more painful, when the *Combat* published the following article on the 27th of October :—

"THE PLAN OF BAZAINE.

"A true fact, which the Government of the National Defence keeps as a secret of State, and which we denounce to the indignation of France as high treason :—

"Marshal Bazaine has sent a Colonel to the camp of the King of Prussia, to treat for the surrender of Metz, and for peace, in the name of His Majesty the Emperor Napoleon III."

These lines brought against the Government an imputation which was an odious calumny. We had received absolutely no news from Metz. A subordinate Prussian officer, taken prisoner at Bourget, had, it is true, spoken of its surrender. At this report I had myself gone to Saint-Denis, and had made inquiries of the Colonel who had heard the report from this man. He had replied that his declaration was inconsistent; and after that we could not give any heed to it.

We had therefore not deceived the population of Paris, and the author of the article made an accusation which was wholly false.

As for the accusation of high treason brought against Marshal Bazaine, I confess I was revolted by it. I was ashamed and indignant that it should have been the production of a Frenchman, when there was nothing to justify it. I had no particular reason to uphold the Marshal; but it seemed to me that, at a moment when he was almost overwhelmed by bad fortune, it was only common justice to wait for explanations of his conduct before branding him with infamy. I considered it my duty to protest against this scandalous publication. The *Journal Officiel* of the next day contained the following :—"The Government has made it a point of honour to respect the liberty of the press, in spite of the difficulties which it may present in a besieged city; it might have been suppressed in the name of public safety and the law. The Government preferred to rely on public opinion, wherein is its true strength; it is in its name

that it denounces the odious lines to be found in the journal *Le Combat*, conducted by M. Felix Pyat."

Then, having quoted the article, the *Journal Officiel* continued:—

"The author of these sad calumnies has not dared to divulge his name; he has signed *Le Combat*. It is truly the combat of Prussia against France; for lacking a bullet which shall strike the heart of the country, he brings against those who defend it an accusation which is as infamous as false; he affirms that the Government deceives the people, by hiding from them important news, and that the glorious soldier of Metz dishonours his sword by treason.

"We meet these inventions with an utter denial. If they were brought before a council of war, they would expose their author to a severe punishment; we believe that of public opinion to be the severest; it will crush these pretended patriots as they deserve;—men who make a trade of sowing mistrust while we are face to face with the enemy, and who would ruin by their lies the authority of those who are fighting with it.

"Since August 17th no direct despatch from Marshal Bazaine has been able to cross the lines. But we know that, far from thinking of the felony which has been imputed to him, the Marshal has not ceased to harass the besieging army by brilliant sorties. General Bourbaki has been able to escape from Metz, and his relations with the delegation of Tours, his acceptance of an important command, give the lie to the fabrications which we yield to the indignation of all honest men."

Was the *Journal Officiel* bold in guaranteeing the military honour of Marshal Bazaine? This is a question not yet settled, upon which competent judges are required to decide. Whatever their sentence may be, the Government of the National Defence has done its duty in refusing to admit (while no proof was produced against him) that a French commander had sacrificed his army by treason. It wanted to stifle this brand of discord cast by a factious hand among an excited population. Unhappily, everything conspired to increase disorder, and those who were watching for a favourable moment to execute their malicious designs took advantage of an insignificant incident to inflame the populace and urge those to violence who were already led astray by calumny.

This incident was the loss of Bourget, which provoked a violent outburst of rage, as unreasonable as the burst of enthusiasm with which the news of the taking of the village had been received. This rage was cleverly made use of by the agitators, and became one of the most direct causes of the tumult of October 31st.

General Bellemare, who commanded at St. Denis, is a brilliant and resolute officer. It was with impatience that he endured the system adopted by the Governor and Committee of Defence. He would have substituted for it such expeditions as would have widened our line of defence, while weakening that of the investment. It was certainly with this thought that on the 27th of October he ordered the francs-tireurs to attempt a sudden attack upon Bourget, a large village situated at a distance of three kilometres from St. Denis, and occupied by a little Prussian garrison.

The francs-tireurs advanced bravely, without once firing, and surprised the enemy. They rapidly routed them from the first houses, but the latter rallied and entrenched themselves towards the church. Supported by the 34th regiment of foot and the 14th battalion of the Mobiles of the Seine, they dashed intrepidly among them, and forced them to retreat, after having taken from them a hundred helmets, arms, ammunition, and several prisoners. The next day two batteries established at the bridge of Iblon, and two others placed on the road of Duguy, covered Le Bourget with their fire, which continued until six o'clock. Our men remained calm under this shower of projectiles, and only thought of extinguishing the fires caused by the shells. At half-past six in the evening a strong body of German foot-soldiers attempted to carry our retrenchments at the point of the bayonet. Received by a musketry which almost struck them down, the assailants withdrew, leaving a large number of dead behind. M. de Bellemare, whose artillery was very insufficient, requested cannon, foreseeing that he would be seriously attacked on the morrow. The reply he received was, that he had advanced without orders, and that he should have retired if he were not strong enough. He replied that he had taken Bourget, and would keep it, even if no cannons were sent to him. And yet he did not exaggerate the impor-

tance of the victory. In describing it in his military report he said:—

"The taking of Bourget, which had been audaciously attacked, and vigorously held in spite of the formidable artillery of the enemy, is in itself an action of little importance; but it proves that our troops, even without artillery, can and will stand firm under the enemy's fire, more terrifying even than murderous. It extends the circle of our occupation beyond the forts, gives confidence to our soldiers, and adds to the vegetable food of the Paris population."

In spite of the strategic unimportance of this bold surprise, followed by a glorious resistance, it caused an indescribable joy in Paris. The reserve of General de Bellemare was regarded as an act of modesty which added to the merit of this action. I partook of this sentiment, and on the morrow, Sunday 30th, I arrived at St. Denis at seven o'clock in the morning for the purpose of congratulating him, when I learned with pain that we had ourselves been surprised at daybreak by an attack from a strong force, and that, after a hard struggle, Le Bourget had been taken from us. It was in this engagement that M. Ernest Baroche, in command of a battalion of Gardes-Mobiles from Seine-et-Oise, died like a hero; overwhelmed by superior forces, he refused to surrender; he marched straight upon the enemy, with his revolver in his hand, and fell, covered with blows. The general had gone on to cover the retreat. I returned, stricken with grief. This accident, which was of no weight in the war itself, became of considerable importance, from having taken place at the gates of a city whose population was already excited, and only wanted a pretext to rouse its worst passions.

I have mentioned that in the afternoon of the 30th I received M. Thiers at the Quay d'Orsay. The meeting of the Government was convoked for ten o'clock in the evening. At the commencement of the conference our illustrious ambassador informed us of the capitulation of Metz. He had not received the news officially, but the officers who had been his escort had given him this sad intelligence as certain. It had been confirmed at Versailles. This was for us a terrible blow. Besides the grave moral effect of such an event, in encouraging the

enemy and discouraging our soldiers, we had to fear another army, now set free to overrun the departments and aid the besieging force to carry forward the attack with additional activity. General Trochu alone lost none of his calm. "This misfortune agitates you," said he; "it does not disturb me. Metz, receiving no external succour, was compelled to succumb. Far from disheartening us, this trial, although a severe one, will fortify our resolutions."

M. Thiers then gave us a detailed account of his journey. He reported faithfully the debate which had taken place in the Council of the Delegation upon the necessity of electing and convoking an Assembly. Contrary to a statement sent to us by M. Gambetta, he affirmed that the departments were unanimous in desiring it. He added that he had found there many partisans of peace; that the Germans themselves desired it; and that possibly it might be less disadvantageous than was generally supposed. In order that it might be so the intervention of the great powers must be obtained, and these had already given proofs of their interest. It was therefore necessary for us to take advantage of it by accepting an armistice, to which he thought Prussia would make no serious objection. He had not been able to discuss the conditions; but he thought it advisable not to show ourselves exacting. The important point was to determine the negotiation. The armistice ought therefore to be arranged for under ordinary conditions, including a general suspension of hostilities with revictualling proportional to its duration. In speaking of the restrictions which M. Gambetta intended to place on the elections, he said that he was not able to deliberate with us upon the subject, that he confined himself as at Tours to stating his conviction that complete liberty must be allowed.

The Council, having expressed its gratitude to M. Thiers for the eminent service he had rendered to France, declared that it adopted his views entirely, and was about to make a fresh appeal to his devotion, in charging him to communicate with the commander-in-chief of the besieging army, and with the Chancellor of the Northern Confederation, for the purpose o arranging with them conditions for the armistice proposed by the neutral powers, and accepted by the Government of the

National Defence. We showed him that it was of great importance to define clearly the situation, which placed the starting-point of the negotiation in the initiative of the neutral powers, and not in that of France. The excitement of public opinion in Paris, as well as our national dignity, commanded us not to seem to make advances to an enemy which had already repelled our overtures. M. Thiers replied that in this he partook of our sentiments.

He then stated his opinion upon the military resources of the Departments. They gave him but little confidence. He allowed that the resistance of Paris was inspiring profound admiration in all Europe, as well as in the rest of France; that it had roused the patriotism of the provinces; that the *élan* there was considerable, particularly among the wealthier classes. In fact, there was no army. The assemblies of men in the district of the Loire did not deserve the name. They were composed of excellent men, but they had neither direction nor chiefs. Comparing them individually, the French soldier appeared to him superior to the Prussian; but the latter had the advantage of discipline, command, science, which were altogether wanting to the former. This was not astonishing, since all our officers were either killed or taken prisoners. M. Thiers did not believe in the efficacy of the efforts of the delegation of Tours, and energetically disapproved of the influence which prevailed in it. Yet the position did not appear hopeless to him, and, in any case, he recognised that the state of opinion in Paris was of the greatest importance, since Paris was the focus of the nation we must at any price prevent the possibility of civil war. An intestine struggle before the enemy would be our certain and sudden ruin, and a loss of our honour, which had until then remained unsullied.

The conference lasted until three o'clock in the morning. It would have lasted longer, so great were the interest and attraction of M. Thiers' communications; but it was necessary for him to take repose. He engaged to meet us again at the office of the Minister of Commerce at seven o'clock, to determine upon the question of revictualling. I withdrew for the purpose of preparing his credentials. His departure was fixed for three in the afternoon.

Before separating, we wrote a notice for publication in the *Journal Officiel* of the following day. It was as follows:—

"M. Thiers has to-day arrived in Paris. He immediately repaired to the Foreign Office.

"He has rendered an account of his mission to the Government. Owing to the strong impression produced in Europe by the resistance of Paris, four great neutral powers—England, Russia, Austria, and Italy, have come to a mutual agreement.

"They propose to the belligerents an armistice, whose object should be the convocation of a National Assembly. It is understood that such an armistice must have for its conditions a revictualling proportional to its duration; and the election of the Assembly by the entire country."

The very terms of this notice prove how necessary we considered it to be to prevent the offence which the word armistice alone would excite in the population of Paris.

We knew that it was in a state of agitation, and we feared the result of the coincidence of these three facts: the armistice, the loss of Bourget, and the capitulation of Metz.

We could not delay the publication of the two first. The presence of M. Thiers had been announced; we were obliged to tell the public what he was about to do at Versailles. The evacuation of Le Bourget was made known at St. Denis on the morning of the 30th. In the evening all Paris knew about it. Hesitation could not be permitted, except with regard to Metz we had no official report. But, unfortunately, we could not be in doubt on the subject. It seemed to us that we had no right to keep silent. We should have given ground for the calumnies of the newspaper *Le Combat*. Duty commanded us to hide nothing; we obeyed it. Moreover, the Prefect of the Police, who was present at our meeting, assured us that no danger was threatened. I begged him to keep on the alert, and to warn me of the least cause of alarm. The commander of the National Guard received the same instructions. I cannot yet understand how, the next day, both of them persevered to the last in their blind confidence.

In accordance with our resolution, the *Officiel* of the 31st published the following:—

"The Government has just learned the sad news of the surrender of Metz. Marshal Bazaine and his army have been compelled to yield after heroic efforts, which they were unable to continue, from failure of provisions and ammunition. They are taken prisoners.

"This cruel issue of a struggle of nearly three months will cause throughout France profound and painful emotion; but it will not damp our courage. Full of gratitude to the brave soldiers, to the generous population who have been fighting for the country, the city of Paris desires to be worthy of them. She will be sustained by their example and by the hope of avenging them."

At length the military report announced the abandonment of Le Bourget in the following terms:—

"*October* 30, *half-past One* P.M.

"Le Bourget, a village beyond our lines, which was occupied by our troops, was cannonaded all yesterday by the enemy, but without success. This morning, early, masses of infantry, to the number of more than 15,000 men, appeared before it, supported by a numerous artillery, while other columns entered the village by Duguy and de Blanc-Mesnil; a number of men who were in the northern part of Le Bourget were cut off from the principal troops, and fell into the enemy's hands. The exact number is not known, it will be stated to-morrow.

"The village of Drancy, only occupied for twenty-four hours, was not supported on the left, and having no time to be placed in a state of defence, its evacuation was commanded, in order that the troops which occupied it might not be compromised.

"The village of Bourget formed no part of our system of defence; its occupation was quite of secondary importance, and the reports which attribute any gravity to the incidents just named are entirely without foundation."

The writer of this notice was right. The taking and abandonment of Le Bourget could have no military effect on the operations of the siege. They were, nevertheless, the chief cause of the popular agitation which took place on that day. The emotion in Paris was deep and universal. It took possession of every mind, and excited pain and rage. This is what those conspirators had been watching for, who wanted the

establishment of a revolutionary power. It would be difficult for me to render an exact account of their designs or doctrines. We have seen the working of them in the lugubrious time of the Commune; and if their ambition and their crimes have come to light, their policy still remains an enigma. What was the object of these sanguinary dictators, who recoiled before no monstrosity, and who, after their defeat, boast of having terrified the civilized world, which they insult and defy? I have sought in vain to understand it, and, I must confess, that on the 31st of October, I was far from suspecting their perversity. I knew them to be greedy of popularity and of power. One of them had said: "We want our turn to come, and we will have it at any price." But I could not understand how they could be so far deluded as to believe that they could succeed to power by overthrowing the Government of the National Defence; above all how they could flatter themselves that they exercised any authority whatever in the army, without which it was impossible seriously to resist the enemy. I did not adequately estimate their hardihood, believing it condemned to inevitable failure. I had confidence in the good sense and honesty of the majority of the National Guard, who, in reality, would have maintained order if they had been well commanded.

Besides, at that time we had a very imperfect idea of the plots which were being laid about us, almost openly; they escaped the Prefect of the Police, who had only broken cords in his hand, or, what was worse, cords knotted in treason. The truth is, that entire battalions of the National Guard had taken part in the sedition. With them were united special corps, volunteers, carabineers, scouts, obeying only commanders who themselves obeyed no one. Among these commanders were many foreigners, men of bad character, and even criminals. It was an army of disorder, always ready for a sudden blow. It had its conciliabules, its watchword, its military orders; it was a docile instrument, always at the disposal of agitators.

But this army only constituted a small minority, little to be feared in the population; and on that day it would have failed, as on the 8th of October, if the whole city had not been drawn away by a thoughtless feeling of irritation, which one moment rendered it hostile to the Government which it ought to

have defended, and made it instinctively fancy that the safety of the country was dependent on placing more energetic men at the helm.

It was by reason of this misunderstanding that the disturbance came suddenly to take the terrible proportions of which on the previous day no indication appeared.

The Mayors of Paris also came to its assistance, almost all against their will, but dragged along by an irresistible current, which urged them to force from the Government bolder measures, both in the city and against the enemy.

Until one o'clock in the afternoon I had received no alarming report. Some National Guards were assembling at Belleville and La Villette; groups began to gather upon the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville; the mayors of the arrondissements, convoked by the Mayor of Paris, met to deliberate upon the propriety of the municipal elections. Such was the news which was conveyed to me, and which I communicated to the chief commander of the National Guard, with the order to guard strongly the Hôtel de Ville.

From the beginning of the month we had been living in the midst of these agitations. While arranging that all precautions dictated by prudence should be taken, we had not to occupy ourselves further with them.

I therefore worked with M. Thiers, and prepared for his departure. Towards half-past twelve we went to lunch.

We were hardly seated when a telegram from my colleague, M. Ferry, announced that the crowd which surrounded the Hôtel de Ville was increasing every minute; that its demonstrations were threatening; that the people seemed to want to force the palisades. I was requested to go thither.

I replied that I must first of all secure the departure of M. Thiers; but that, instead of accompanying him to the bridge of Sèvres, as I had intended, I would appoint some officers to escort him, and repair myself to the Hôtel de Ville.

I had just finished my telegram when M. Ferry was announced. He confirmed what had been said, adding that the Hôtel de Ville might be invaded at any moment. In fact, in a few minutes another telegram informed us that a deputation, followed by a large crowd, had forced their way into the *Grande*

Salle. There was no more time to be lost; I told M. Thiers that we were accustomed to these alarms, and that the present one would not be more dangerous than former ones had been. That hastened his departure; his escort was ready; I was anxious to know he was safe on the left bank of the Seine; I took leave of him; he took his seat in the carriage awaiting him, and I hurried away in the direction of the Hôtel de Ville. On the threshold of the *ministère* I met M. Ernest Picard, who was coming to take leave of M. Thiers; him I took with me. Near the Hôtel de Ville a dense crowd barred our passage. We went to the Préfecture of the Police, to learn the precise nature of the situation. The Prefect had left; his *chef de cabinet* was unable to give us any information. We went away, and by making a circuit we were enabled to reach the Hôtel de Ville, passing the barracks. It was just past two o'clock.

I must do justice to my friend M. Ernest Picard, who during that day showed so much *sang-froid* and vigour. He did not want us to enter the Hôtel de Ville, showing me, not without reason, that it was useless to offer ourselves as a holocaust to the rebels; that it would be wiser and more politic to avoid their action, and, without losing a minute, to combine the means for the attack which we should be obliged to make on them.

I do not say that this advice was not reasonable, yet I did not yield to it. The members of the Government were there; they called us; they were in danger; it was our duty to join them in attempting to quell the disturbance, and to share their fate if they proved the weakest. I had given orders to the Prefect of the Police and the commander of the National Guard. They would certainly be executed; and I knew the National Guard too well not to be convinced that, whatever might happen, the rebels would be crushed.

M. Picard was not convinced; he followed me from friendship, although thinking that I was mistaken.

The members of the Government were not all in the usual place of meeting. General Trochu, M. Jules Simon, and M. Pelletan had consented to give audience to a deputation which had ascended to the large hall. Thither I went. The hall was full; in the middle of a small circle General Trochu was

standing, his arms crossed, with a severe and calm countenance; he was listening to M. Maurice Joly speaking in behalf of the deputation. The latter, in spite of evident agitation, which he repressed with difficulty, expressed himself with a certain propriety; he brought forward questions relative to the abandonment of Bourget, which he taxed as an act of treason; and he was frequently interrupted by the crowd, which considered him too moderate. When he saw me he interrogated me about the armistice, accusing us of making arrangements with the enemy, and deserting the defence. He concluded by saying that, in circumstances so disastrous, the Government could not refuse the wishes of the people, who demanded loudly the appointment of more resolute men; that an end must be put to this temporization, which was ruining everything; and that Paris, whose fate was at stake, had the right to protect herself; that he claimed the election of a Commune, which should share with the Government the weight under which the latter was bending.

The General replied, without appearing to feel either agitation or emotion; he explained at some length the advantages and necessity of an armistice. It was a question of negotiating, not of capitulating. The Government would accept no condition which was opposed to the interests of France, or still less to her dignity. Paris was resisting valiantly, but it could not repel the enemy if left to itself. The help of the departments was indispensable; the best way to render it efficacious was to convoke an Assembly. It would be a strong support to the defence, and would oblige the enemy to retire. The reproaches against the Government were therefore unjust; they were above all, dangerous, they divided the city, which needed union more than anything; they might effect civil war. To expose Paris to this fatal risk was to serve the cause of the Prussians, who expected more from our internal distractions than from their own attacks. As for the taking of Bourget, the General declared that it was not of the least military consequence, and that the population of Paris were quite misled in being troubled by it. The occupation of the village had taken place without orders and contrary to the general system planned by the Governor of Paris and the Committee of Defence; the

troops occupying it ought to have withdrawn. The General invited the deputation to appease the movement just begun, which might end in fatal consequences. The Government was about to examine seriously the claims which the deputation had just brought forward. It desired to conform itself to the wishes of the population in everything compatible with its duty; this duty commanded the sacrifice of every consideration, and even of its own popularity, to the sacred task of the defence.

This harangue, frequently interrupted by vehement exclamations, raised tempests of recriminations in that tumultuous assembly. The General forced his way through the group which separated him from the door of the hall opening into the room where the sittings were held; we followed him and rejoined our friends, to whom we rendered an account of what had just passed.

There was now no doubt of the position of affairs; that scene was but the prologue of a more serious drama. If we were not promptly rescued, we incurred the risk of being forced from the Government. The movement might, however be stayed by announcing the municipal elections. The deliberation opened with this subject.

The discussion was lively. The majority of the Council absolutely rejected the adjunction of fresh members and the constitution of an authority which should rival that of the Government. This would have been decreeing anarchy. But was it not possible to grant to the population of Paris what we had always requested for it, and what we had only adjourned in order to avoid divisions—the election of its municipal magistrates? We should certainly find in them useful concurrence. Chosen by the free suffrage of their fellow-citizens, they would exert a salutary influence over them; in short, with regard to what concerned ourselves, personally, we were no longer able to retain the authority which necessity had imposed upon us. This authority was now attacked. We could only restore its strength by placing it in the hands of the population of Paris, with the power of either confirming it in ourselves or of investing it in the hands of citizens who might seem to the people more worthy of confidence than we were.

At this moment the Mayor of Paris, M. Etienne Arago, entered the hall in a state of great emotion. "The mayors of the arrondissements," said he, "have united together; they have sent me to you to beg you to unite your efforts with theirs, for the purpose of preventing an imminent catastrophe. They request that the Government join them and declare with them that the elections are about to take place; they are unanimous in thinking that they are now the only means of safety. In the name of the country, in the name of concord, I conjure you not to reject their request."

While speaking, M. Etienne Arago could with difficulty restrain his tears. He pressed our hands anxiously, and his whole heart was engaged in the exhortations he poured forth. Nevertheless, he was told that what the mayors requested was neither more nor less than the abdication of the Government and the installation of the Commune; that, rather than submit to this, we were ready to face every eventuality, even the most terrible. Some one added that the claim of the mayors was unaccountable, for the evening before they had deliberated upon the opportuneness of making the elections, and the majority had voted their adjournment. Moreover, the Council examined the question, and the Mayor of Paris was requested to assure his colleagues that we should desire to settle it in favour of immediate elections; that the Government itself would agree to them; that Paris, having thus the power of giving itself a municipality and government of its choice, would have no longer cause for complaint or sedition; that we expected the concurrence of all good citizens against those agitators who, by their criminal plots, were rendering themselves the auxiliaries of Prussia.

M. Etienne Arago went away, promising to report our words to the assembly of the Mayors; but, some time after, he returned, pale, troubled, and trembling with anger; he exclaimed, throwing his scarf upon the table, "They have sullied it by their insults. I lay it down, and shall not take it until the honour of the magistrate be avenged. All is lost—the doors of the Hôtel de Ville have been forced—the Palace is invaded by furious men—another moment and they will be here."

And in truth a frightful tumult was heard in the adjoining

rooms, and soon a crowd of armed National Guards, men of the people, volunteers in various uniforms, rushed into the hall, with savage cries. We remained seated around the table, where we were deliberating. On my right was General Trochu; on my left M. Garnier-Pagès; opposite to me M. Jules Simon and M. Picard. The General and the other members tried in turn to make themselves heard, but in vain. Vociferations, imprecations, and jests rendered all discourse impossible. The crowd was continually increasing, and the crush became terrible. The leaders of the tumult exhausted themselves in superfluous efforts to surmount it; they were not more heeded than we were. Standing on the table, trampling upon the papers, sand-boxes, and inkstands, their loudest shouts were unable to obtain for them a hearing. Flourens and Millière, who seemed to be the leaders, ran from one end of the table to the other, claimed an obedience which no one thought of giving them. This excited crowd was rejoicing in its triumph. It showed its joy by noise. It was happy to have humiliated us. Behind us, some desperadoes were overwhelming us with insults. The first act of this terrible drama lasted nearly two hours, with no possibility of introducing order into that indescribable confusion. It was growing dark; we could not foresee what would be the end of these orgies. Lamps were ordered, and, thanks to this incident, Flourens had an opportunity of pronouncing a few words.

I had only once seen this unfortunate young man, who was endowed by nature with brilliant gifts, and who, if born under more happy circumstances, seemed destined to a career well worthy of the illustrious name he bore. He had done me the honour of coming to see me with two chiefs of the insurrection, a delegation in which he had taken an active part. I had been struck by his countenance and bearing, although there was in him a feverish mobility, which gave cause for anxiety. I did not foresee that I should next meet him at the head of a mad sedition, carried away by a turbid flood, which had obliterated his noble and grand qualities. Stamping upon the strange stage which served him for a "*pavois populaire*,"[1] he

[1] It was formerly the custom to bear newly elected kings of France upon shields or pavois, ornamented with draperies, as a *sign of their elevation to the throne.*

entreated, scolded, threatened in turn. At length the appearance of the lamps having brought about some sort of order, we were enabled to hear these words, pronounced in a shrill voice :—

" Citizens,—You have overthrown a Government which has betrayed you (unanimous applause). Another must be constituted. (Yes, yes !) I propose that you name at once the following citizens :—Flourens (numerous reclamations), Millière, Delescluze, Rochefort (No, no, not Rochefort ; Yes, yes, we will have Rochefort), Dorian (applause), Blanqui, Felix Pyat."

Here the orator's voice was drowned in the tumult ; he could, however, be heard to say that the lists must be written, in order to scatter them among the people, and to placard them in the city ; he also requested that a hall should be prepared for the new government. The audience murmured loudly at this proposition, and some National Guards exclaimed that everything ought to take place in presence of the people. " Well," said Flourens, " leave us then a little space, so that we may not be stifled. I command the people to depart. The National Guards will remain in the hall. As for the members of the deposed Government, we retain them as hostages (numerous voices : They must be made prisoners !) until they give in their resignation with a good grace, if not— !" (Repeated applause.)

During this burlesque scene we had not stirred from our seats. General Trochu gently took off his epaulettes, and passed them to the commander Bibesco, who was near him, with Captain Brunet, to protect him. He told me afterwards that he was desirous to secure the sign of his military authority from dishonour, and that he felt more at ease after this precaution. He retained an impassible countenance, and smoked his cigar peacefully. Besides, all those strangers pressing about us were not our enemies ; some even shook hands with me privately, and told me to take courage. Near me was one of my secretaries, M. Hendlé, who only left me upon my express order for the purpose of going to give information to my family, which I rightly supposed to be in the deepest distress. A young brother, whose name I regret to have forgotten, refused, with a generous determination, to abandon me, and remained by my side to the last minute of that long torture. To all those who approached me demanding my resignation, I replied

that they were losing their time, and that they would obtain nothing from me. Towards eight o'clock, a great noise was heard outside; the door of the hall was burst open, under the pressure of a group of resolute men. It was the 106th battalion, led by its commander M. Ibos, who had been enabled to force an entrance into the Hôtel de Ville. The volunteers of Belleville prepared and lowered their arms, but they raised them immediately, intimidated by the vigour and rapidity of movement among our men. I saw in the crowd the proud, noble glance of M. Ferry directed towards me, inviting me to take advantage of this succour. But he could no more come to me than I could go to him, separated as we were by the council-table, covered by the insurgents, and surrounded by a dense crowd, which filled the intermediate space. Nevertheless some intrepid National Guardsmen slipped up to General Trochu, and bore him away. It was a moment of indescribable confusion. I saw the General floating as it were on that human sea, borne by it towards the door, thus making a passage by which Emanuel Arago, Ferry, and Pelletan were enabled to escape. As for M. Picard, he had had an opportunity of leaving the hall at the instant of its invasion; and it was to his energy, presence of mind, and authority that we afterwards owed our deliverance.

I attempted to follow my colleagues; violently pushed back by the wave which closed behind them, I returned to my place. M. Jules Simon, M. Garnier-Pagès, General Leflô, General Tamisier were retained, like myself. M. Dorian was also in the hall, but in different circumstances from those by which we were surrounded.

Then commenced tumultuous discussions, which it would be impossible to describe. I remember that M. Dorian, who was made President, and whom they requested to take possession of the portfolio of the Minister of War, mounted upon the table to harangue the auditory, and to refuse the double honour which they wanted to give him. "I am," said he, "only a modest worker; I give myself entirely and unreservedly to the service of the Republic; but I cannot accept the part of a political man. Leave me to that work for which I am most adapted. I am employed constantly with the armament: I shall continue

this work. I earnestly entreat you to avoid all violence, all disturbance. We ought to make an appeal to the suffrage, and not to dishonour the defence by civil war."

The Assembly applauded these words, which were so full of modesty and patriotism; but it was not contented to let the man, elected by itself, descend from the elevated position thus assigned to him. For my own part, I should have liked to hear him speak otherwise. Nevertheless, I did not doubt but he yielded, though imprudently, yet with generous intentions, to the hope of disarming the insurrection, and preventing a deplorable collision.

The crowd being rather less numerous, our movements were less impeded, and now we must either be allowed to get away, or be made prisoners. I had several times protested against the violence which was offered us, and I claimed the choice of withdrawing from the hall. My colleagues likewise insisted; and when we at length made ourselves heard, we used the strongest terms in asserting this right. Wearied with our remonstrances, the Assembly decided that we were its prisoners. We took our stand in a window recess. Flourens placed about us a triple circle of Belleville volunteers, who were ordered to fire upon us at the first alarm, or at the least sign of resistance on our part. In fact, a shot was fired, but it was an accident, and the discharge passed over M. Simon's and my head without hurting any one.

M. Millière, who commanded a battalion of the National Guard, came up to me courteously, and explained to me the conditions under which we might obtain our liberty. "You have only to sign your resignation," said he. "That would be nothing but the declaration of a fact, since, in applauding us, the people have already taken the power from you. But we do not intend to usurp it. To-morrow we shall call together the electors; they will declare their will, and you will give up your portfolio to the new Government; until then, you will retain your office."

I admired so ingenuous an audacity, but it did not suit me to enter into a discussion with my interlocutor. "I do not wish to reply to you," said I. "I cannot even do so; for, by the very fact of the violence you exercise over my person, I

am no longer aught but a thing; my will is bound to my liberty. In depriving me of the one, you prevent me from using the other. Permit me to go free, and I will do my best that this insurrection may end without bloodshed. We have so much interest in avoiding civil war, that no sacrifice ought to be too great to this end. Retained as I am by you against all right, by a crime which nothing can excuse, I cannot parley with you. Do what you will with me, and do not weary yourself in asking me what I am determined to refuse you."

M. Millière appeared shaken by these reasons. He mounted on the table, claimed silence, and said nearly the following words :—

" Citizens,—You desire the members of the deposed Government to give their resignations (Yes, yes); that is altogether useless, since you have already taken all authority from them. They are no longer anything. In requesting them to sign their resignations, you ask an act of cowardice." Violent murmurs, coupled with signs of approbation, followed these words, and there were in that tumultuous assembly what reporters call " *mouvements divers.*" M. Millière wanted to take advantage of it. He tried to enable us to leave the hall; but, in spite of his orders, his soldiers crossed the bayonet upon him and us. Flourens, who made the same attempt, was not more successful, and we returned to our place in the window among our guards, who did not forego the pleasure of insulting us. A fine man, bearing the badge of captain, who was swinging on a chair, repressed them paternally. And when one of them expressed a desire to send us down below, he made him to understand that he would lose nothing by exercising a little patience.

I should never end if I attempted to relate all the incidents of that strange and terrible night, during which our greatest suffering was the painful thought of France's humiliation and of the sad fate reserved to her after that revolting saturnalia. I thought anxiously of the armistice which I had been preparing with so much solicitude, and, above all, of my dear negotiator, about whose fate I entertained the greatest fear. I did not know how his departure had been effected. I would have given much to know that he was in safety. An officer

of the National Guard, who was near me, seemed to guess my thought, and sure of causing me pain, he told me that M. Thiers had been arrested before he reached the bridge of Sèvres. "Are you sure of that?" said I, looking at him. He was confused, and, although not reassured, I was little moved by his wicked attempt.

Towards ten o'clock I had the vexation of seeing M. Dorian approach me. He spoke to me most affectionately, begging me to go with him into a neighbouring hall, where we could chat and come to an understanding. His countenance showed sadness and kindness. He leaned familiarly down towards the chair I occupied, and tried to convince me. I was deeply touched to see him thus. "You pain me," said I, "much more than you think. I beg you to leave me here. I prefer to remain here, and I will converse with no one. For me to have the courage to refuse you, my resolution must be unmoveable; do not attempt to make me change it."

He departed, expressing his regret, and sent to me M. Delescluze, who turned his back to me disdainfully when I claimed to be set at liberty.

One of the most grotesque persons who took part in these vulgar and lamentable scenes was certainly a man named Alix, who had enjoyed, twenty-five years ago, a moment's celebrity with his telegraphic snails.[1]

I had seen him at that time, without speaking to him. He was then a young man, fair, with a shrewd and rather remarkable countenance. I should not have recognised him under the mask of a little excitable, talkative old man, who, dressed in the uniform of the National Guard, with an umbrella under his arm, kept order about the prisoners. It was amusing to see his comic gravity, his affected importance, and the seriousness with which he acquitted himself of his improvised task of gaoler. He accompanied his actions with philosophical sentences, delivered with emphasis, and seemed to expect that he would be one of the leaders of the Republic on the morrow. He protected General Leflô and General Tamisier, and said, with incomparable dignity, "No one will obtain anything from me which can compromise my responsibility."

[1] M. Alix formerly proposed a scheme for making use of snails in telegraphy.

He thought, however, that he might allow one of his men to bring us something to eat without exposing himself too much. It was half-past ten o'clock. I was dying of hunger. I thankfully accepted a thick piece of bread and a slice of half-cooked horse-flesh, then I leaned against the window and slept.

The heat, which had become suffocating, awakened me. I wanted to open the window to get a breath of air, and immediately two gun-shots were heard. I closed the window, after having seen the quay covered with National Guards. My movement had frightened them; they expected an attack, and were too hasty in wanting to prevent it. All this was the work of a moment, and the tumult in the hall had drowned the noise outside. At the same instant M. Jules Simon was violently insulted, struck even by one of our guards. He protested against this conduct. Fortunately the wretch who had laid his hand on him was taken away; and the Provost Alix cried, in a stentorian voice, "No one is to touch that window again; I forbid it!"

But half an hour after, towards one o'clock in the morning, a noise reached us, which grew louder every moment. It came from outside, and drew nearer. A shudder ran through the hall, each went to his post, and the captain of the Belleville volunteers, turning towards his carabineers, cried: "Attention!" They stood upright, and prepared their arms.

Some minutes passed: then we heard violent blows either from crow-bars or hatchets upon the doors of a neighbouring room; our volunteers made us stand ready for them to fire upon us; I thought for a moment that all was over with us, but I soon discovered that our guards lacked the resolution necessary to the execution of a crime. The leaders disputed among themselves; some wanted to engage in the conflict, others opposed this vehemently. I saw that they hesitated and dared not touch us. Besides, the noise outside appeared to be more distant; arms were raised, the captain took his seat again, and we our post in the window.

Succour, however, was at hand, and that prolonged suspense was nearly at an end. This help we owed chiefly to M. Picard. He had hardly crossed the threshold of the Hôtel de Ville before

he found his way to the Governor's assistant officers; no order had been given by them; they were waiting without taking any resolution, no one would accept the responsibility of it. M. Picard did not stop a moment at this vain formality; he ordered the *rappel* to be beaten, the legions to be convoked, and led immediately to the Hôtel de Ville. M. Jules Ferry and his brother Charles placed them at his disposal, and showed as much coolness as intrepidity. As the National Guards assembled, the commanders joined them, occupied the avenues, and surrounded the Hôtel de Ville. When General Trochu was set free, he found the attack organized, and he had only to complete the details. Still he avoided immediate action, and in that he showed wisdom. However painful our situation might be, I hoped, for myself, that it might be prolonged until the daybreak. The sleepless night and fatigue brought on a gradual discouragement, which weakened the factions in spite of their excitement. I observed the progress of this, and knowing by the rapid glance I had taken from my window that the palace was invested, I should have preferred that the morning light might accomplish the confusion of our enemies, and subdue them. But outside our friends were not aware of this state of things; the most cruel reports made them tremble for our fate. To temporize further appeared to them like forsaking us. Then was given the order to the battalion of the Indian Mobiles, who occupied the Napoleon barracks, to enter a subterranean passage communicating with the Hôtel de Ville. These brave men rushed courageously into this narrow dark passage. The outlet was not known to the insurgents; in less than half an hour the battalion had reached a court in the interior; it was master of the place.

Warned of their arrival, the National Guard outside prepared to commence an attack in the front. We were ignorant of these movements; but it was easy to guess, by the increasing confusion of the insurgents, that the decisive hour was near. "We shall be attacked," cried one of them. "We must fire from the windows," said another. "Let the young *fumistes* of the battalions come forward," said a third; "we will place them on the roofs." The agitation was extreme; contradictory orders were given. Flourens, mounted on the table, again

attempted to harangue his volunteers. This time he was less violent. "Let us not give to the foreigner the spectacle of a fratricidal quarrel," said he. "Let us avoid bloodshed, but let our rights be respected."

Suddenly a loud tumult was heard outside. It resounded through the staircases, in the passages, and approached the door of the hall in which we were. "To arms! to arms!" cried, in a stentorian voice, an insurgent leader, brandishing his sabre, and rushing forward. The Belleville volunteers seized their guns, pointed them at us; it was a solemn moment, and I still ask by what chance it came to pass that not one of those men (several of whom were trembling with intoxication) pulled the trigger? But the victory was already gained; the National Guard entered in a crowd, with cries of "Vive la République!" the volunteers were disgracefully expelled from the hall amid firing of guns, and disarmed. Many hands pressed ours; each disputed the honour of accompanying us. I could not name all those from whom I received marks of sympathy. Charles Ferry and M. de Choiseul insisted on giving me their arm. We went down in the midst of loud acclamations, and, although it was three o'clock in the morning, I passed before the front of the battalions which surrounded the Hôtel de Ville. A noble young man offered me his horse, but I thought it prudent to refuse him. This young man, whom I then saw for the first time, and who was destined to fall a month after by a Prussian shell, was the commander Franchetti, a true cavalier, a model of grace and valour, who had given up the pleasures of an elegant easy life in order to equip and command a company of scouts, who, during the entire campaign, were distinguished by the most brilliant bravery.

Before going to seek a little repose, to which we had some claim, we went, my colleagues and myself, to the Governor. We determined on the measures which the situation required, and arranged to meet the same morning at seven o'clock at the Foreign Office.

Such was the fatal day, whose date, the 31st October, will be remembered in history. I have related what I knew and saw of it, without presuming to throw light upon all the incidents

which may yet remain obscure. In my opinion, the insurrection which renders it so sadly celebrated did not spring from a conspiracy. It broke forth spontaneously at the electric shock of a storm which gathered slowly in the midst of a population misled by pain and rage. The criminal skill of certain agitators had prepared the elements, and the blind passion of the crowd brought about the explosion. Paris, which the evening before would have stoned the partisans of the Commune, left them full liberty of action during the whole day. It only came to its senses at the inauspicious name of Blanqui, and at the news of an attempt upon the life of the Ministers. The cool obstinacy with which some of them remained at their post, holding out against the sedition to the last, has often been regarded as needless temerity. Without their presence, it is said, the attack would have been easier and more prompt, and the repression of the tumult more exemplary. I cannot share this opinion. It is not for me to pronounce upon the merit of my colleagues' resolution, since I was associated with it; but I remain convinced that it saved the situation. If the sedition had not met with that resistance at the Hôtel de Ville which paralysed it in spite of its material success, it would certainly have extended its action further; and on the other hand, I doubt if the National Guard would have marched, if it had not been to deliver the members of the Government whose lives were so directly threatened.

And what would have happened if the National Guard, yielding to the anxiety caused in all minds by the news of the capitulation of Metz, the armistice, the abandonment of Bourget, had allowed the Government to succumb? The Committee of Public Safety installed in the Hôtel de Ville would not have obtained the concurrence of the army, even if M. Dorian had consented to preside over it. On the night of October 31st, General Ducrot, who occupied Porte Maillot, learning the defeat of the Government, did not await orders; he made his troops take arms, harnessed horses to the cannons, and commenced a march towards Paris; he did not retrace his steps until he knew all was over. But who does not feel that a struggle between the National Guard and the army would have destroyed the defence and given us up to the invader? On the

31st of October, we escaped this misfortune. I long thought we should be spared it, and until the last day of the siege I gave the little intelligence, strength, and devotion which I possessed to save my country. Yet it would be incorrect to say that in warding off the phantom of civil war on the 31st of October the Government succeeded in preventing all the consequences which that day necessarily entailed. We shall see some of these appear with inexorable rigour in after events, and become a constant source of embarrassment by adding a special aggravation to our misfortunes and our faults.

PIÈCES JUSTIFICATIVES.

No. I.

NOTE UPON THE ACTION OF FRENCH DIPLOMACY WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT THE WAR OF 1870.

WHILE I was writing the latter pages of this work, M. Benedetti published a book of the deepest interest, under the title of *Ma Mission en Prusse*, which throws light on the events which preceded and caused the war, and is at once both curious and decisive. It proves to a certainty that the Emperor's Government was *au-courant* not only with the military condition of Prussia, but with all the political facts which should either have dissuaded France from the war, or have led her only to engage in it when provided with such alliance and armaments as were fitted to maintain so formidable a struggle. M. Benedetti places before his readers despatches and confidential documents which have never before been published, thus rendering a great service to the cause of truth, at the same time that he greatly attenuates, if he does not weaken, the reproaches of which he was the object. In his despatch of August the 25th he calculates the augmentation of the Prussian army by the annexation of the conquered countries:—

"When these territories," writes he, "whose population, in round numbers, reaches 4,500,000, come under the recruiting laws in vigour in Prussia, the result will be an increase of from eighty to ninety thousand soldiers; in fact when the fusion is as complete for the 'Landwehr,' which will take place in a few years, the army of Prussia will amount to 800,000 combatants."

During the years 1866 and 1867, our ambassador constantly informed the Government of political incidents which might enlighten it upon the arrangements of Prussia. But it is principally in a long report of January the 5th, 1868, which is a summary of his correspondence of the year, that he defines

clearly what France had to fear or to hope, and at the same time he urged the Government to resolve either upon peace or war. In this remarkable document is to be found the explicit indication of M. Bismarck's design, viz., the unity of Germany; and although no precipitation was displayed, he never swerved from his object, and neglected no opportunity of gaining it. M. Benedetti explains that the Prussian Government does not seek a conflict with us, but that it would risk one if it were necessary to the achievement of the Germanic assimilation in the south of the Main as it is realized in the north. "What is its object?" writes he, "what end does it pursue? It is not to attack us, I have said, and repeat it, at the risk of assuming a great responsibility, because such is my profound conviction. Its aim is to cross the Main and to unite the south of Germany to the north, under the authority of the King of Prussia, and I add that it intends, if necessary, to gain its object by arms, should France openly offer any obstacle."

Further on he continues:—

"While awaiting favourable circumstances, M. Bismarck neglects no means of preparing men and things for the attainment of his object. . . . I firmly believe, that when the state of Europe permits it, and when things in Germany appear to him to have arrived at the point he desires, he will rapidly execute the plan which he has conceived, and, either under the title of Emperor, or the temporary one of President of the Germanic Confederation, the King of Prussia will be proclaimed Sovereign of Germany."

It is in view of these eventualities that M. Benedetti tries to make the Imperial Government understand that the moment has come to take a stand, either to dispel the suspicions of the Cabinet of Berlin, or to prepare for a formidable conflict. The terms in which he puts the question are as follows:—

"I have already said how French public opinion is represented in Germany, and even the opinion of the Emperor's Government. We are supposed to entertain hostile intentions, and I do not think I am mistaken when I add that a conflict between the two countries is regarded as certain, if not imminent. All our declarations in contradiction of these conjectures or apprehensions avail nothing. The reservation with which we

have sometimes accompanied them have, on the contrary, contributed to confirm the mistrust which prevails. The *Gazette du Weser*, an official newspaper, was the interpreter of German public desire as well as the organ of the Prussian Government, when, in a recent article, to which *Le Constitutionnel* has replied, it expressed regret that the Emperor's Government has not so declared itself as to banish all doubt respecting his intention not to meddle with German affairs. The fact is that the question which occupies the Prussian Government, and the parties which uphold it, is, how it may suit us to appreciate the development which has been given to the Northern Confederation; they are anxious to know how we shall act with regard to the union of the north and south, and nothing either in our language or our actions appears to them to prove that we shall not oppose it; they interpret our words, however measured they may be, and our armaments, as indications of a resolution on our part to put some obstacle in its way. In one word, they want to be certain that we shall not in any way hinder those plans which they intend to execute with regard to the Southern States.

"If such is to be our definitive resolution, I must say that we ought not to neglect an opportunity of declaring it. We should thus inaugurate a peace policy, and the benefits arising from such a policy can only be obtained by completely dissipating the clouds which exist between France and Germany. *The uncertainty which disturbs the public mind on this side of the Rhine is the means used by the Prussian Government to keep alive its susceptibilities.* Another objection to this uncertainty is that it tends to strengthen the tie between Prussia and Russia, to give a solidarity to the ambitions of the one in Germany with those of the other in the East, and that it permits the Cabinet of St. Petersburg to raise difficulties on the Danube which will lead to a general war, while we shall peaceably make considerable sacrifices on the Rhine. The imminence of these complications may perhaps draw England from her indifference, and effect a diversion. I will not here examine things from this point of view, and I confine myself to stating that Russia would certainly show herself less enterprising, that Prussia, on her side, would not encourage her to raise the Eastern question, for the

simple reason that it would be of no advantage to herself if she did not think it necessary thus to pay for the liberty which she claims in Germany.

"Another remark, no less worthy of notice, is: that the mistrust with which we are regarded in Germany is an essential element in the authority and prestige acquired by M. Bismarck; that sentiment brings about him all the moderate parties, and leads them to sacrifice to him the principles which they represent. Your Excellency knows with what ability the President of the Council, whether on the eve of the elections, or before an important discussion, has made use of the phantom of French intervention, and certainly he would not have obtained such satisfactory majorities, if he had not easily persuaded them that the enemy was watching the frontiers. Let these apprehensions be dispelled, and M. de Bismarck will encounter in liberal opinion (which preponderates in Prussia, as in the other Germanic States) the firm resolve of submitting all the acts of the Prussian Government to a control whence will arise internal conflicts and a certain limitation of the immense power in the hands of the Sovereign. This justice must be rendered to the Germans, that the sentiments which they display towards us are such as have been inspired by recollections of the past, and by the fear of invasions of which their country has been the theatre; once reassured against so fatal a calamity, they would employ all their strength to constrain their leaders to accept freely, with all their consequences, the institutions of the free States.

"These considerations would have no worth if the Emperor's Government thought that France could not acquiesce in the union of Germany without suffering loss, and that one of our first duties was to resist it in spite of the attitude of Russia, in spite of the weakness of Austria, in spite of the anarchy into which Italy is thrown by party spirit. I can understand that, in this case, we should await events, without explaining ourselves more than we have done, and choose our opportunity for recalling Prussia to the strict observation of the treaty of Prague. If we were not a party to this act, we traced the preliminaries, and offered them to the belligerent powers, who, in accepting them, contracted with us a moral obligation not to

exceed its clauses. The conferences opened on that occasion either have no meaning, or they signify that France considered those transactions as compatible with her interests, and that those courts which consented to make them the conditions of peace recognised on their side, by adhering to them, that they ought to conform their claims to those conditions. This engagement would be violated by the union of the Northern and Southern States of Germany under any form whatever; for the preliminaries of Nicholsburg stipulated for those States a position *independent* and *international*, as a guarantee for the safety of the surrounding countries.

" The question of right, in my opinion, cannot then be doubtful; but it cannot be denied that public feeling in Germany has generally pressed the Prussian Government to take the course she has adopted: union first, then liberty; such has been the programme of the national party, including all shades, liberal and moderate, ever since it has formed an idea of the probable results of the successes obtained by the Prussian army, and it would second the King's Government in a war against France with all the ardour of enthusiasm and hatred, in the hope of insuring the execution of that plan. There is in Germany a party, having at its head decayed princes, and the greater part of those who have more or less preserved their sovereign power. There reigns in many of the secondary States an invincible dislike to all that belongs to the Prussian Government. In Hanover and Saxony, and among the democrats and Catholic populations of the South, these sentiments exist; but at the commencement of a national war, the most obstinate among those who profess them will abstain from participating in them; they will sacrifice their particular opinions to the masses who would applaud, and devote themselves passionately to the enterprise. This situation would necessarily undergo the influence of a first battle, and if it were fatal to Prussia, then those resentments which have sprung from her abuse of victory would be openly declared. *But the German populations generally would look on the struggle (whatever might be the circumstances which caused it) as a war of aggression on the part of France against their country; and if the fortunes of war were in their favour, their requirement would know no bounds; they*

would equal those of Prussia, whom it has always been so difficult to satisfy, every time that she has been victorious. It is therefore a formidable war that we should have to maintain, in which, at the commencement, an entire nation would take part against us. The Emperor's Government, consequently, could not be too careful to weigh in advance all the chances, and to reflect before taking a determination which the interest and safety of the country might seem to demand.

"Here I will end this statement, which I recommend yet more to your indulgence than your attention, and I will sum it up in a few words: The German union will shortly take place, ought we to accept it? In this case, do not let us hide our intention of doing so with good-will; let us reassure Prussia; she will then be less closely bound to Russia, and the commercial and industrial state of Europe will rise from its distress. If we do not mean to accept the union, let us prepare for war without delay, and let us be quite sure beforehand of what concurrence Austria means to give us; let us so arrange as to settle first of all the Italian question, then that of the East; all our strength united will not be too much to be victorious over the Rhine; the campaign of 1866 has clearly shown what will be the dangers of a struggle engaged in on both sides of the Alps."

These quotations need no comment. They prove to a certainty that the most exact information was furnished to the Emperor's Government, so that it could not be mistaken upon the dangers to which it exposed France by provoking a rupture with Prussia. It was aware that it would come into collision with an army of 800,000 men ready to enter the field; nay more, that it would come into collision with an entire nation, who would be roused by an indescribable enthusiasm the moment that it became a question of repelling French aggression. Not only did the Government neglect these wise counsels, but concealed them. When the opposition complained (and with reason) that the *Livre jaune* contained no despatch relating to Germany, the Ministers replied that they published nothing, because there was not between Prussia and ourselves the most remote probability of a cause for conflict; thus they kept in their archives these important informations that it would have been so useful to the nation to have known.

Afterwards, when the decisive moment had come, it was in the same ignorance that the Emperor's Government engaged in the struggle, bringing in opposition to the enemy a force which was its inferior by three-fourths—not even taking the precaution of arming its fortified towns, leaving all to chance; so that in a few weeks we were ruined.

M. Benedetti's book is not less instructive with regard to the candidature of Prince Hohenzollern, and the termination of the short negotiations which followed the unqualifiable declaration of July the 6th. A former despatch of the 27th of March 1869 gives an account of a proposition made at Berlin by the Spanish ambassador at Vienna, and hints at certain preliminaries being entered into with the Cabinet of Madrid on the subject of the Prussian Prince. The despatches of March 31 and May 11 make known the explanations given by Bismarck, and the serious doubts which they produced. The Government was therefore warned; so much so, that the first idea of these arrangements had come from a member of the French Imperial family; this was in the month of March 1869. This plan was not proceeded with, being abandoned by both parties. But when it was again proposed in 1870, it would have been wise to have appeared less astonished at it. With less display, we should have had more authority to oppose it; but such was not the policy of the Emperor's Government. After having committed a great error in publicly challenging Prussia, the Minister of Foreign Affairs committed a greater in sending M. Benedetti to the King at Ems. By this means he hastened forward dangerous difficulties, and this facts have only too well proved. From the 3d to the 14th of July, the exchange of despatches between the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Prussian ambassador, and the ambassador of Madrid, was most active. M. Benedetti publishes forty-nine telegrams or reports giving hourly information concerning the negotiation. These statements prove, 1st, that the King of Prussia had intended to leave his relation full liberty, but that, having been informed of Prince Leopold's decision to withdraw from the candidature to the Spanish crown, he charged our ambassador to announce to the Emperor's Government that he approved of this resolution; 2d, that the King refused, in spite of our demand, to give a per-

sonal guarantee for the future, intending to reserve to himself his liberty to act according to circumstances; 3d, that the Minister of Foreign Affairs made of this refusal the *casus belli*, which himself and M. Ollivier afterwards attached to a pretended insult thought to have been offered to our ambassador.

Now, upon this decisive point I have called that ambassador himself to witness, by reproducing those of his despatches which were read at the tribune. Now, it is his own assertion which I bring in opposition to the ministerial allegations. In a letter written to a friend on the 25th of November 1870, and which serves as a preface to his book, M. Benedetti says, "I will add, since you ask it, that there was at Ems neither insulter nor insulted, and the King himself was greatly surprised when he heard of the fables published by certain journals, which imagined themselves to be reproducing the accounts of eye-witnesses."

But it is not only on this declaration that the proof of the French Cabinet's resolution reposes. The despatches published by M. Benedetti leave no doubt upon this subject. M. le Duc de Gramont telegraphs on the 7th of July:—"We know by the assertion of the Prince himself that he has arranged the whole business with the Prussian Government, and we cannot accept the evasive response with which M. de Thile seeks to extricate himself from the dilemma. You must obtain a categorical reply, followed by its natural consequences. *Now this is the only one that can satisfy us and prevent war.*"

"*The King's Government does not approve of the Prince of Hohenzollern's acceptance, and gives him the order to abandon this determination, taken without its permission.*

"It then remains to let me know if the Prince, obeying this injunction, renounces his candidature officially and publicly.

"We are in great haste, because we must take the first steps in case of an unsatisfactory reply, and *from Saturday will be commenced the movement of troops, so as to be ready to enter the field in a fortnight.*

"You will remind the King of what crowns are prohibited from certain Princes in order to maintain the balance of power. The Duc de Nemours in Belgium, an English, Russian, or French prince in Greece, a Murat at Naples disavowed by the

Emperor, etc. Above all, I insist upon the necessity of not letting time be gained by evasive replies. We must know if we are to have peace, or if a refusal obliges us to prepare for war.

"If you succeed in obtaining the King's revocation of the Prince's candidature, it will be a great service; the King will have insured the peace of Europe."

"If not, then it will be war.

"As for the Prince, his reign in Spain will not last a month. But as for the war provoked by this intrigue of M. de Bismarck, how long will that last, and what will be its consequences?

"Thus we want no circumlocution, no delays. Never was there a more important mission. May you succeed; this is my earnest desire.—Yours, GRAMONT."

It is therefore an ultimatum that our ambassador is charged with signifying to the King of Prussia. He is requested to disapprove of the Prince of Hohenzollern's candidature, and to give the latter the order to withdraw. If not, war begins at once.

And as the King claimed a delay in order to learn the reply of Prince Leopold and that of Prince Antoine his father, the French Minister is irritated, and in his impatience he telegraphs on the 10th of July:—

"You must use every effort to obtain a decisive reply; we cannot wait, for fear of being forestalled by Prussia in preparations. We must begin these preparations to-day.

"I know from a certain source that at Madrid the Regent desires the withdrawal of the Prince of Hohenzollern. As soon as you can, send me a telegram."

The same day he addressed the following private letter to M. Benedetti:—

"MY DEAR COUNT,—I received your telegram of last evening at half-past ten this morning. It was stopped on the way, and is so much torn in the most important part that it is almost impossible to discover the sense. I send Count Daru to you, begging that you will allow him to return immediately, for we can wait no longer. While the King is evading you from day to day, under the pretext of arranging with Prince Hohenzollern,

able-bodied Prussians are being recalled to their own country, and time is being gained upon us. We cannot at any cost give our adversaries the same advantages as were so fatal to Austria in 1866. Moreover, I must tell you clearly—the public are excited, and will forestall us. We must begin. We only await your despatch before calling together the 300,000 men which are to be counted upon. I beg you earnestly to write, or telegraph something decisive. If the King will not advise the Prince to withdraw, then the only alternative is war immediately, and in a few days we shall be on the borders. The King is under the necessity of declaring himself. After the confession he has made of having authorized the Prince's acceptance, he is compelled either to defend him, or at least to advise his withdrawal. But what is of the most importance for us, is to know promptly what to expect.

"Thus, my dear Count, I beg you to write by post, in cipher, to confirm your telegrams, and as soon as possible, by Count Daru and the Count de Bourquency.

"In order that you may be *au-courant*, I send you the last telegrams I have received from Madrid and St. Petersburg. That from Madrid will serve to set the King's conscience at rest if he thinks himself bound by the Spanish advances, which he received with so little regard for us.—Yours, etc.

"GRAMONT."

The next day, the Minister sent a telegram, which arrived before the above letter:—

"You cannot form an idea of the public excitement; it is seen on every hand, and *we count the hours.* You must insist upon obtaining an answer from the King, negative or affirmative. We must have it to-morrow; the day after will be too late.

"The Regent of Spain, after a conference, has decided to send to the Prince some one authorized to see the King and even M. de Bismarck, to request the withdrawal of the candidature. This will be General Dominquez or M. Silvela. You can make use of this information, if you think it necessary to the success of your efforts; but it would be preferable for the Government to owe the withdrawal entirely to the King's intervention.

"If you succeed, telegraph immediately, and come to Paris; bring yourself the details of the negotiation."

On the 12th of July, another telegram from the Minister, requesting the King of Prussia to associate himself with the declaration of the withdrawal made in the name of Prince Leopold by his father, and to give the assurance that he will not again authorize the candidature.

It is well known that the King of Prussia refused this. He confined himself to saying that he authorized the French ambassador to inform the Emperor's Government that he approved of the withdrawal of the Hohenzollern Princes. This assurance at first seemed to suffice, and the Keeper of the Seals announced that all was ended. This news was received in Paris with a satisfaction which found its expression in a rise in the money market. M. de Gramont was then under a strange delusion when he said he was urged on by public opinion; the public only asked for peace. The Cabinet misunderstood it by returning to its first impression, and continuing to require from the King of Prussia a guarantee which the latter refused to give. It thus sought a pretext for a rupture, and took upon itself all the responsibility, since M. de Gramont in his impatience spoke of commencing the next day. On the 13th of July, at a quarter to ten in the evening, he sent the following telegram to M. Benedetti:—

"I have received your telegrams of to-day, of 12 and 1 o'clock. As I have already told you, French feeling is so much roused that it is with difficulty that we have been able to delay giving explanations until Friday.

"Make a last attempt with the King, tell him that we confine ourselves to asking him to forbid the Prince of Hohenzollern's reconsidering this question in the future. The King must say, 'I do forbid it.' And he must authorize you to write to me, or charge his minister or ambassador to let me know what he says. That will suffice. And in fact, if the King has no reserve, this will be for him only a secondary question; but for us it is a very important one; the King's word alone can constitute a sufficient guarantee for the future.

"*I have ground for believing that the other Cabinets think us just and moderate.*

"*The Emperor Alexander supports us warmly.*

"At all events leave Ems, and come to Paris with the reply, negative or affirmative. It is necessary for me to see you by Friday noon. If needful, take a special train. Continue to telegraph to me all you have to communicate.

"Perhaps, when you receive from the King the news of the withdrawal of the Prince, you might say to him: 'Sire, your Majesty is our guarantee for the Prince's word, for you are aware that as a power we have no relations with this Prince, and that, consequently, our official safeguard in the country is in the King's word."

I do not know whether the Commission nominated in the sitting of July the 15th, and which had only two hours to transact its business, was acquainted with these despatches. Now that they are brought to light by M. Benedetti, we may suppose that if the Chamber had taken the time to read them, it would not have voted the war.

The Government appeared so much of this opinion, that it brought into the discussion the allegation of a pretended offence offered to the nation, and it is chiefly upon this offence that the reporter supports his conclusion in favour of the Government.

Now, M. Benedetti declares that there was neither insulter nor insulted. Everything is included in the following telegram, in which it is impossible to see the offence which formed the excuse for precipitating a great nation into the dangers of a formidable war, without soliciting an explanation, without attempting a negotiation.

No. II.

A TELEGRAM SENT FROM THE PRUSSIAN GOVERNMENT *à propos* of the refusal of the King to continue negotiations with M. Benedetti relative to the Candidature of the Prince of Hohenzollern.

I here give the text of the only telegram sent by the Minister of Foreign Affairs at Berlin. The translation is made by M. Stover, "traducteur-interprète juré près le tribunal de la Seine."

This was not in possession of the Ministers of the 15th July; it was not submitted to the Commission. The latter only saw the telegrams of our agents, announcing that they had seen the Prussian telegram. It is upon their interpretation of this document that the Chamber voted the declaration of war.

"BERLIN, 13*th July* 1870.

"The news of the withdrawal of the Prince of Hohenzollern having been communicated by the Royal Spanish Government to the Imperial French Government, the French ambassador has again requested his Majesty the King, at Ems, to authorize him to telegraph to Paris that his Majesty engaged for the future never to give his consent in case the Hohenzollern Princes should renew their 'candidature.' Thereupon his Majesty refused to receive the French ambassador again, and informed him, through an aide-de-camp, that his Majesty had nothing further to communicate to the ambassador."

No. III.

REPORT TO THE KING OF PRUSSIA, BY ONE OF HIS AIDES-DE-CAMP, M. LE LIEUTENANT-COLONEL COMTE RADZIVILL.

(Translated from the German.)

"His Majesty the King, after an interview with Count Benedetti, which had taken place upon the 'Promenade des Bains,' on the morning of July 13, charged me, towards two o'clock in the afternoon, to bear to the Count the following message:—

"'That his Majesty had received, at one o'clock, by a letter from the Prince Hohenzollern, dated from Sigmaringen, the complete confirmation of the news which the Count had received that morning directly from Paris concerning the renunciation of the Prince to the candidature for the Spanish crown.

"'That consequently his Majesty regarded the affair as settled.'

"The Count, after having heard this communication, replied to me, 'that, since his interview with the King, he had received another *despatch* from M. de Gramont, by which he was com-

missioned to request an audience of his Majesty, and to state once more the desire of the French Government:

"'1st, That the King should approve of the Prince's withdrawal.

"'2d, That he should give the assurance that in the future this candidature should not be renewed.'

"To this request his Majesty replied to the Count, through me, 'that he approved of the withdrawal in the same sense and to the same extent as he had approved of the acceptance of the candidature itself:

"'That it was from Prince Antoine of Hohenzollern that his Majesty had received by letter the communication of the withdrawal, the latter having been authorized by Prince Leopold.

"'As for the second point, concerning the assurance for the future, his Majesty had only to refer to what he had said to the Count in the morning.'

"Count Benedetti thanked me for this reply, and said he would transmit it to his Government, as he was authorized to do.

"But, for the second point, having received formal orders from M. de Gramont in his last despatch, he was forced to request another interview, even if it were only to hear the same words again from his Majesty, and the more so as there were in the last despatch fresh arguments which he wanted to communicate to his Majesty.

"Upon this, his Majesty replied, for the third time, to Count Benedetti, through me, after dinner, towards six o'clock, that he must refuse to enter into any new discussions upon the last point (the guarantee for the future); that what he had said in the morning was his last word upon the subject, and that he could only stand by that.

"The Comte de Benedetti, having learned that the arrival of Count Bismarck at Ems was not certain to be the next day, declared that he would remain contented with this declaration of his Majesty.

(Signed) A. RADZIVILL,
Lieutenant-Colonel and Aide-de-camp to the King.

"EMS, *July* 13, 1870."

No. IV.

OFFICIAL REPORT UPON WHAT PASSED AT EMS, DRAWN UP UNDER THE SURVEILLANCE OF THE KING.

I borrow the following document from quotations given by M. Benedetti in his book *Ma Mission en Prusse;* it completes the informations in the two former ones:—

"Count Benedetti, on the 9th of July, at Ems, solicited an audience of the King, which was immediately granted. During this interview he asked the King to give to the hereditary Prince of Hohenzollern the order to withdraw his acceptance of the Spanish crown. The King replied, that in this affair he ought only to be regarded as a King, and that consequently he could give no order relative to the acceptance of the crown. On the 11th of July, the French ambassador asked and obtained another audience, in which he urged the King to force the Prince to give up the crown. The King replied, 'that the Prince was entirely free to make his own plans; that, besides, he did not even know where the Prince was at that time, but that he had planned a journey into Switzerland.' Upon the Promenade des Sources, on the morning of the 13th, the King gave the ambassador a supplement of the *Gazette* of Cologne, which had just been given him, and which contained a private telegram, dated from Sigmaringen, announcing the renunciation of the Prince. The King remarked that he had not yet received a letter from Sigmaringen, but that he expected one that day. Count Benedetti said to his Majesty that he had the evening before received the news of the Prince's withdrawal; and when the King inferred that the affair was ended, the ambassador requested him in an unexpected manner to give him a formal assurance that he would never give his approval in the future if the candidature were again proposed. The King refused to comply with this demand, and maintained his decision, when Count Benedetti renewed his request. In spite of this, the Count after some hours requested a third audience. When asked to name his object in requesting this, he replied that he desired to renew the morning's conversation.

The King refused another audience, maintaining that he had no other reply to give than that already furnished, and that all negotiations must henceforth be made with the Ministers. The desire which Count Benedetti had of taking leave of the King, when his Majesty left, was satisfied, since, when starting for Coblentz, the King bowed as he passed, at the railway station, on the 14th of July. Thus *the ambassador had three audiences with the King*, which always preserved the character of private interviews, since Count Benedetti never presented himself as charged with a mission, nor as a negotiator."

No. V.

Those who have read my narration will know that upon learning our first disasters, on the 8th of August, when all might still have been repaired, I entreated that the chief command should be taken out of the Emperor's hands. Until the 4th of September I did not cease to beg the Corps Législatif to adopt this means of safety. The last few days, the Minister of War assured us that the Emperor had no longer the chief command. This assertion is a complete contradiction of the extract from the following report, and the note which accompanies it, taken from the *Journal des Débats* of the 31st of October 1871.

Extract of a letter from King William to the Queen of Prussia, of the 3d of September 1870, containing the account of the capitulation of Sedan:—

". . . I gave the command for the cannonade to cease, and sent Lieutenant-Colonel de Bronsart with the white flag to parley, and to propose the capitulation of the army and the town. On the way, he met a Bavarian soldier who was coming to announce to me that a French emissary with the white flag had shown himself at the gates of the town. *Lieutenant-Colonel de Bronsart was admitted into the town, and, as he requested to see the 'Général-en-chef,' he was conducted, to his great surprise, to the Emperor, who wanted immediately to give him a letter for me.* The Emperor asked the lieutenant-colonel what was his mission. Upon the reply which was made him, 'to summon

the fortress and army to surrender,' he said to our *parlementaire,* that for this purpose he must address himself to General Wimpfen, appointed to the command in the place of MacMahon, who was wounded,—and that he himself was about to send his Adjutant-General Reille to me with his letter.

"It was seven o'clock when Reille and Bronsart arrived; the latter preceded the French envoy a little; and it was only through him that I learned with certainty that the Emperor was in the town. You can judge of the impression which this produced upon me! Reille descended from his horse and gave me the letter from the Emperor, saying that he had no other commission. Before opening the letter I said to him, 'But I demand as a first condition that the army lay down its arms.' The letter began thus: 'Not having been able to die at the head of my troops, I lay my sword down before your Majesty,' —leaving all the rest to me.

"My reply was, that such a meeting between us was painful, and that I desired a plenipotentiary to be sent to me with whom the capitulation might be concluded. After giving my letter to General Reille, I addressed a few words to him, as to an old acquaintance,[1] and thus ended this episode."

Note extracted from the *Journal des Débats,* Oct. 31, 1871:—

"It is said that the Commission of Inquiry upon the capitulations has just received a communication concerning documents which are, until now, new. It appears from these documents that to the last the Emperor kept the supreme command. In fact, it is certain that he, upon his own authority, caused the parley-flag to be hoisted, when the Generals wanted to attempt to force a passage through the enemy's lines.

"If, in reality, the Emperor had taken only the secondary part which Marshal MacMahon so chivalrously attributed to him in his deposition before the Commission of Inquiry, the question presents itself, What right had he on his own responsibility to order the white flag to be hoisted?"

[1] General Reille had been appointed by the Emperor to attend the King of Prussia upon his visit to Paris in 1867, during the Paris Exhibition.

No. VI.

REPORT OF THE TWO SITTINGS HELD ON THE 4TH OF SEPTEMBER BY THE CORPS LÉGISLATIF in the Dining-hall of the Presidency, one at five o'clock, the other at nine in the evening.

After the sitting of the Corps Législatif, so suddenly interrupted by the invasion of the hall by the mob and the National Guards, a large number of the deputies met in the dining-hall of the Presidency of the Corps Législatif, to hear the Report of the Commission nominated to examine the different propositions made at the afternoon's sitting.

The following is a summary of the proceedings of this sitting —President, M. Alfred lé Roux.

M. Garnier-Pagès in his speech urges the Chamber to join the Provisional Government established at the Hôtel de Ville.

M. Buffet protests energetically against the violence of which the Chamber has been the object.

The Commission charged with examining the three propositions whose *urgence* was declared, is invited to make known its conclusions.

M. Martel, reporter, expresses himself as follows:—

"SIRS,—Your Commission has examined the three propositions which have been submitted to you. After deliberation, these propositions have been successively put to the vote, and that of M. Thiers has gained the majority.

"But your Commission has added to this proposition two paragraphs; one of which fixes the number of members who should compose the Commission of Government and National Defence; the other declares that this Commission will name the Ministers. Consequently, the text is as follows:—

"'Seeing that the supreme power is vacant, the Chamber names a Commission of Government and National Defence. This Commission is composed of five members chosen by the Corps Législatif. It will name the Ministers.

"'*As soon as circumstances permit, the nation will be called by means of a constituent National Assembly to decide upon the form of Government which it intends to adopt.*'

"A discussion is raised upon this proposition, which is at length adopted, after a speech from M. Thiers, M. Grévy, and M. Dréolle.

"It is proposed to send delegates to confer with the members of the Chamber sitting at the Hôtel de Ville.

"The following are delegated—Messrs. Garnier-Pagès, Léfèvre-Pontalis, Martel, Grévy, De Guiraud, Cochery, Johnson, Barthélemy St. Hilaire.

"To facilitate conciliation, the Chamber declares to its delegates that they may consider as provisional the number of five members intended to compose the Commission of the National Defence.

"All the bureaux, excepting the fifth, had named their commissaries. These were MM. Daru, Buffet, Gaudin, Martel, Jules Simon, Josseau, Le Hon, Dupuy de Lôme.

"MARTEL, *Reporter.*"

In the evening another meeting of deputies took place in the same hall. Several members of the new Government improvised at the Hôtel de Ville took part in the meeting. The following is an account of the sitting:—

September 4th, 1870, 8 *o'clock* P.M.

In the absence of a President and Vice-Presidents, M. Thiers is asked to preside.

He takes his seat, and at his side are the Secretaries of the Corps Législatif—MM. Martel, Peyrusse, and Josseau.

M. Thiers.—Gentlemen, I am President for the moment. The arrival of MM. Jules Favre and Jules Simon is announced, who come to bring us the reply to the words of conciliation carried to them by your delegates. We will hear these gentlemen.

MM. Jules Favre and Jules Simon are introduced.

They take their place opposite to M. Thiers.

M. Jules Favre.—We come to thank you for the advances which your delegates have made to us. We are touched by them. We understand that they are made in a patriotic spirit. If we differ in policy in the Chamber, we are certainly agreed when it becomes a question of the defence of the soil, and of our threatened liberty.

At this moment a certain fact is accomplished, viz., the

establishment of a Government sprung from circumstances which we could not prevent, a Government of which we have become the servants. We have been attached to it by a movement which has, I confess, responded to the deepest sentiment of our mind. I have not now to expatiate upon the faults of the Empire. Our duty is to defend Paris and France.

When we have in view an object so dear to all, it is certainly not a matter of indifference to be united in sentiment with the Corps Législatif. Moreover, we cannot alter what has been done. If you think proper to give it your ratification, we shall be grateful. If, on the contrary, you refuse us this, we shall respect the decisions of your consciences, but we shall reserve the liberty of our own.

This is what I am charged to tell you by the Provisional Government of the Republic, the presidency of which has been offered to General Trochu, who has accepted it.

Doubtless you know the other names. Our illustrious colleague, who presides over you, is not among them, because he has not felt himself at liberty to accept the offer. As for ourselves, who are men of order and liberty, we considered that, by accepting it, we accomplished a patriotic mission.

M. Thiers.—The past cannot be justly appreciated by us at the present moment. History alone can do that.

As for the present, I can only speak for myself. My colleagues who are here have not commissioned me to tell you whether they accord or refuse their ratification of the events of the day.

You have assumed an immense responsibility. Our duty to all is to desire ardently that your efforts may succeed in the defence of Paris, and that we may not long have to witness the heartrending spectacle of Prussian troops devastating our land.

These desires we all entertain for the love of the country, because your success will be that of the nation.

A Voice.—What are the names which compose the new Government?

M. Jules Simon.—The members have been chosen to compose a Commission charged with the defence of the capital, that is to say, that they are all the deputies of Paris, excepting the most illustrious among them, because he has not accepted the offer made to him; but he has just referred to the great respon-

sibility which we have taken upon ourselves, and he desires our success.

In this choice there have been no personal partialities; there has been the application of a principle. If it were otherwise, we should see other names besides those of the deputies of Paris in this Commission. We have but one thought,—that of resisting the enemy.

M. Peyrusse.—Paris once more gives the law to France.

MM. Jules Favre and Jules Simon together.—We protest against that assertion.

M. Jules Favre.—The Provisional Government is composed of MM. Arago, Crémieux, Jules Favre, Jules Ferry, Gambetta, Garnier-Pagès, Glais-Bizoin, Pelletan, Rochefort. The last will not be less wise than the rest. At all events, we preferred to have him with us to having him against us. I thank the President for what he has said in expressing his hopes for the success of our enterprise. These patriotic words unite us to your departments, whose concurrence is necessary to the work of the national defence.

The Count Le Hon.—What is the position of the Corps Législatif with regard to the Provisional Government?

M. Favre.—We have not deliberated upon that point.

M. Thiers.—I have not interrogated our colleagues upon the fate of the Corps Législatif, because, if we have anything to communicate upon that question, it seems to me that we ought to wait until these gentlemen have withdrawn.

MM. Favre and *Jules Simon* withdraw.

M. Thiers.—Messieurs, we have only a few moments to remain together. My motive for not having addressed any question to MM. Jules Favre and Simon was that if I had done so, I should have recognised the Government which has just sprung from circumstances. Before recognising it, there are facts and principles to be discussed which it does not become us to treat at this moment.

To oppose it now would be anti-patriotic. These men ought to have the concurrence of all the citizens against the enemy. We desire their success, and we cannot hinder them by an internal struggle. May God help them! Let us not judge each other. The present is already too full of bitter pains.

M. Roulleaux-Dugage.—What policy ought we to pursue in our departments ?

M. Thiers.—In our departments we must live as good citizens, devoted to the country. So long as nothing is required of us contrary to our consciences, and to true social principles, our conduct will be easy; we will not dissolve; but, in the presence of such great misfortunes, we will retire with dignity to our homes, for it becomes us neither to recognise nor to oppose those who are about to struggle against the enemy.

A Voice.—But how will it be known what has been said here ?

M. Thiers.—Will you have the goodness to trust that to me, you who have done me the honour to give me the Presidency of some minutes in these painful circumstances ? I shall arrange with M. Marcel and your Secretaries to draw up a statement of to-day's proceedings.

M. Buffet.—But ought we not to record a protest ?

M. Thiers.—I entreat you, do not take that course. We are before the enemy, and, in that situation, we all make a sacrifice to the dangers which France incurs; these are immense. We must be quiet, must pray, and leave history to judge.

M. Pinard (of the Department of Nord).—We cannot keep quiet before violence done to the Chamber; we must give an account of it in writing !

M. Thiers.—Do you not see that if you bring forward such a report as a protest, it will immediately recall the violation of another assembly ? Have all the facts of the day need of a formal statement ?

M. the Count of Daru.—The seals were put on the door of the Chamber.

M. Thiers.—Is there anything more serious than seals upon persons ? Have I not been at Mazas ? You do not hear me complain of it.

M. Grévy.—The Provisional Government, to whom you did me the honour of delegating me to speak as to colleagues, could not give us their definitive reply. They promised to deliberate, and to send it to us at nine o'clock P.M. I did not think they would have been ready before that time; that is why I have not come here earlier.

We arrived too late at the Hôtel de Ville. A Provisional Government was already installed there. We saw there the copy of a proclamation, which convinced us that our mission was without object.

M. Alfred le Roux.—I could not come sooner, because I was commissioned by you to see General Trochu. I had to go to him. I went with M. Estancelin. Upon arriving, we learnt that we were too late.

My duty is now to tell you that in these circumstances I have been your faithful interpreter to the best of my ability.

The Duke de Marmier.—You will permit me, whose father has long commanded the National Guard of Paris, to express a consolatory thought, which is, that the men who invaded the Chamber did not belong to that National Guard, but to that of the suburbs.

M. Buquet.—I protest against what has just taken place, particularly against all idea of separation. I am completely agreed with the protest of M. Buffet against the violence offered to the National Representative Assembly.

MM. Buquet, Pinard, de St. Germain, and some others, declare that they protest.

M. Thiers.—Pray do not let us commence a course of recrimination; that would take us too far, and you ought to remember that you speak before a prisoner of Mazas (agitation).

I hoped that, although sad, we should have parted united. I entreat you not to proceed to angry words. Follow my example. I disapprove of the act which has taken place to-day. I cannot approve of violence; yet I have but one thought,—that we are in the presence of the enemy, who is near Paris.

M. Girault.—I share in M. Buffet's opinion when he protested in the sitting of four o'clock. We ought not to take any party step, nor to be divided. Let us bring the Government to come to an understanding with the Chamber. By this means we shall keep peace with the departments. Let us support each other and France. I shall go to the Hôtel de Ville. If they will not listen to me, I shall protest.

M. Thiers.—Do you want to renew the discussions of the last few years? I do not think it a suitable time.

I protest against the violence to which we have been sub-

jected to-day, but this is not the moment to give way to resentment. Is it possible that we can put ourselves in opposition to the Provisional Government at this critical moment?

In the presence of the enemy, who will soon be under the walls of Paris, I think we have but one thing to do—that is, to withdraw with dignity. (M. Thiers' emotion is shared by the whole Assembly.)

The sitting ended at ten o'clock.

No. VII.

Proclamation of the Mayor of Paris, announcing the Election of the Provisional Mayors.

Citizens of Paris,—The Government of the National Defence does not intend to usurp the rights of the people. As soon as circumstances permit, the citizens will be called upon to elect the mayors of their municipalities. In the interval, and in order to provide for the urgent necessities of the service of the city in so exceptional a situation as the present, the mayor of Paris nominates, as provisional mayors of the twenty "arrondissements," the following citizens:—

1st Arr., Tenaille-Saligny, solicitor at the Cour de Cassation.
2d „ Tirard, merchant.
3d „ Bonvalet, merchant.
4th „ Greppo, former representative of the people.
5th „ J. B. Bocquet, former magistrate.
6th „ Herisson, solicitor at the Cour de Cassation.
7th „ Ribaucourt, doctor of medicine.
8th „ Carnot, former member of the Provisionary Government of 1848.
9th „ Ranc, literary man.
10th „ Turpin, merchant.[1]
11th „ Leonce Libert, professor.[2]
12th „ Alfred Grivot, merchant at Bercy.
13th „ Pernolet, engineer.

[1] He did not accept, but was replaced by M. O'Reilly, former Secretary of the "Prefecture" of Police.

[2] Did not accept. Was replaced by M. Coffard.

14th Arr., LENEVEU, editor of the *Siècle.*
15th „ CORBON, former representative of the people.
16th „ HENRI MARTIN, historian.
17th „ FRANÇOIS FAVRE, literary man.
18th „ CLÉMENCEAU, doctor of medicine.
19th „ RICHARD, manufacturer.
20th „ BRALERET, tradesman.

These citizens are invited to commence their duties at once, and to name each two assistants. It is needless to remind the new administrators of the Parisian mayoralties that, in presence of the enemy marching upon Paris, their first duty is untiringly to carry forward the armament of the citizens, and night and day to hold themselves ready to second the national defence.

" *Vive la République !*"

The Mayor of Paris,

ETIENNE ARAGO.

No. VIII.

CIRCULAR OF THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR.

To the Prefect,—

SIR,—In accepting the power during a time of such danger, we have accepted a post of peril, and one which entails great responsibility. The people of Paris, who, on the 4th of September, regained their liberty, after so long a period of repression, fully understand this, and show by their acclamations that they look to us for the salvation of the country.

Our new Republic is not a Government which admits of political dissensions or vain quarrels. It is, as we have said, a Government of National Defence, a republic of combat *à outrance* against the invader.

Surround yourselves, therefore, with citizens who, like ourselves, are inspired by the desire of saving the country, and are prepared for any sacrifice.

In presence of these newly chosen fellow-labourers, display the coolness and vigour which ought to belong to the representative of a power determined to conquer the enemy at any price.

Animate the courage of all by your ceaseless activity in everything that relates to the armament and equipment of the citizens, as well as their military instruction.

All prohibitory laws, all the fatal restrictions upon the manufacture and sale of arms, have disappeared.

Let each Frenchman take a gun, and let him place himself at the disposal of the authorities: *the country is in danger!*

You will receive instructions every day concerning the details of the service. But act upon your own judgment, and endeavour especially to gain the concurrence of all; so that, by means of a great and unanimous effort, France may owe her salvation to the patriotism of all her children.

LÉON GAMBETTA.

No. IX.

NOTE IN THE "OFFICIEL" UPON THE ATTITUDE OF THE DEPUTIES OF THE OPPOSITION.

6th of September 1870.

The Government of the National Defence continually receives the warmest expressions of sympathy from the deputies of the Opposition elected by the departments.

All seem to understand that, in the present crisis, the power ought to rest with those who have to fight.

The enemy is now marching upon Paris.

It is in Paris that all the hopes of the country are centred. To meet this formidable struggle, in which we shall conquer by perseverance, the Paris population has chosen for its leaders men to whom it has already given its confidence, and for its General a devoted citizen, with whom specially rests the organization of the defence.

Nothing is more logical or more simple. When Paris has done its duty, it will restore to the nation the mandate which necessity imposes upon it, and will convoke a constituent Assembly. The deputies of the departments understand this, therefore they do not attempt to hinder the Government of the National Defence either by their advice or their concurrence.

No. X.

Circular of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

M. Jules Favre, Vice-President of the Government, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, addressed the following circular to the diplomatic agents of France abroad :—

Sir,—The events which have just taken place are so well explained by the inexorable logic of facts, that it is needless to expatiate upon their meaning.

The population of Paris (in yielding to an irresistible impulse which has been too long repressed) has obeyed a higher necessity, that of its own safety.

It was determined not to perish with the criminal power which led France to its ruin.

It has not pronounced upon Napoleon III. and his dynasty "*la déchéance;*" it has simply registered the fact, in the name of justice and public safety.

And this sentence was so truly ratified beforehand by the national conscience, that not one among the warmest supporters of the fallen power has risen to defend it.

It has fallen of itself, under the weight of its faults, amid the acclamations of an immense people, without a drop of blood having been shed or a single person having been deprived of his liberty.

It is a fact, unparalleled in history, that those citizens upon whom the people have conferred the dangerous duty of fighting and conquering, think not for a moment of those adversaries who the day before threatened them with military executions. By refusing them the honour of any repression, they have proved their blindness and their powerlessness.

Order has not been disturbed a single moment. Our confidence in the wisdom and patriotism of the National Guard, and the entire population, permits us to affirm that it will not be disturbed. Being delivered from the shame and peril of a Government which betrayed us, all will understand that the first duty imposed by this regained sovereignty is to command ourselves, and to find our strength in the respect for right.

Moreover, time presses; the enemy is at the gates; we have but one thought, that of driving him from our territory.

This obligation, which we accept resolutely, is not imposed on France by us; she would never have incurred it if our advice had been listened to. At the price of our popularity we supported a peace policy. We shall persevere in it with growing conviction.

Our heart is saddened at the spectacle of the human massacres in which the flower of the nation is disappearing, when a little good sense, and full liberty, would have preserved us from these terrible catastrophes.

It is impossible to express our admiration for our heroic army, sacrificed by the incapacity of its generals, and which is, nevertheless, yet greater in its defeats than it would have been by the most brilliant victories.

For, in full recognition of errors which were compromising it, that army sacrificed itself sublimely to a certain death, thus redeeming the honour of France from the disgrace of her Government.

All honour to it! The nation sympathizes with it. The Imperial power wanted to separate them, but misfortune and duty unite them in a solemn embrace. Sealed by patriotism and liberty, this alliance renders us invincible.

Being prepared for the worst, we calmly regard the situation in which we are placed.

This situation is described in a few words. I submit it to the judgment of my country and that of Europe.

We loudly condemned the war; and, protesting for the right of peoples, we requested that Germany should be left mistress of her own fate.

We desired that liberty should be at the same time our common tie and safeguard; we were convinced that these moral forces would for ever insure the maintenance of peace. But, as a guarantee, we claimed a weapon for every citizen, a civic organization, elected leaders; then we should have been invulnerable.

The Imperial Government, which had long divided its interests from those of the country, opposed and rejected this policy. We resume it, in the hope that, being taught by experience, France will have the wisdom to practise it.

The King of Prussia, on his side, has declared that he made war, not with France, but with the Imperial dynasty.

The dynasty has fallen. Free France rises once more.

Will the King of Prussia continue an impious struggle, which, at the least, will be as fatal to him as to us?

Will he give to the people of the nineteenth century the cruel spectacle of two nations destroying each other, and accumulating ruins and corpses, regardless of humanity, reason, and science?

He is free to do so; but let him assume this responsibility before the world and before history!

If it be a challenge, we accept it.

We will not yield an inch of our territory, nor a stone of our fortresses. A disgraceful peace would only entail a war of extermination in a short time.

We will only treat for a durable peace.

In this, our interest is that of all Europe; and there is some ground to hope that, free from all dynastic bias, the question will be thus regarded in the "*Chancelleries.*"

But even if we were alone, we would not yield.

We have a resolute army, forts well armed, an enceinte well established, but, above all, 300,000 stout hearts, resolved to hold out to the last.

When the citizens go devoutly to place their garlands at the foot of the statue of Strasbourg, they do not simply obey a feeling of enthusiastic admiration,—they take their heroic watchword, they swear to be worthy of their brethren of Alsace, and to die like them.

After the forts are the ramparts, after the ramparts the barricades. Paris can hold out three months, and then conquer; if she succumbed, France, at her call, would avenge her; she would continue the struggle, and the aggressor would perish.

Europe must know this. We have only accepted the power with this object. We would not retain it a moment if we did not find the population of Paris and of France determined to share our resolutions.

These I resume in one word: before God who hears us, before posterity who will judge us, we only desire peace. But if Prussia continue against us a fatal war, which we have con-

demned, we shall do our duty to the end, and I have the firm confidence that our cause, which is that of right and justice, will triumph. It is thus that I ask you to explain the situation to the Ministers of your Court, with whom you will leave a copy of this document.

JULES FAVRE,
The Minister of Foreign Affairs.

No. XI.

CIRCULAR OF THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR.

To the Prefect,—

SIR,—As a functionary appointed in a time of extreme peril by a Government, which has taken the name of the Government of the National Defence, your character and conduct are thus as clearly defined as the pressing necessities of public safety will permit.

The defence of the country before all! Insure this, not only by preparing to put into execution all the measures voted under the late administration, but by rousing all the energy of those by whom you are surrounded, by organizing the devotion of the people, so that the Government can take advantage of it in a time of need. All your efforts must be directed for the moment to the one great effort which must be made with a view to save France.

With this aim, you have a right to count upon the ratification of all the measures that you may take in this supreme interest. If, as I do not doubt, you concentrate all the active forces of the nation towards this great object, you will put an end at the same time to all the divisions, and all the conflicts between different administrations,—a course of action which is of the greatest importance in a crisis like the present.

With regard to your relations with the former *personnel* of the fallen Government, its mayors, assistants, municipal counsellors and functionaries, engaged exclusively in the administration, your conduct is to be guided by the ideas I have just

expressed. After the slumber and enervation of eighteen years, the great need of our country in this terrible day of her awakening is activity without confusion; she wants life, a regular and organized life. Everywhere then, that you find a tendency to the free action of the citizens assembled in their "Communes," encourage them (at the same time regulating their action), if they are inspired with the spirit of patriotism and devotion which animates the representatives of public interest.

The Government of the National Defence is composed of men elected by the people; it represents in France the great principle of universal suffrage. This Government would fail in its duty and be unworthy of its origin if from the first it did not turn its attention to the municipal corporations, which, like its own members, are the result of the public votes. Wherever those municipal councils are established which have been elected under a liberal and democratic influence, let the members of those councils become our principal auxiliaries. On the contrary, wherever, under the fatal pressure of the late administration, the aspirations of the citizens have been crushed, and where the elected councils and the municipal officers only represent retrograde tendencies, surround yourselves with provisional municipalities, and place at their head mayors whom they themselves will have chosen, if in their choice they obey the patriotic necessities which are laid upon France. In short, think only of the war, and those measures which it necessitates; give calm and security, so as to obtain in return union and confidence; remove by authority all that does not aid the National Defence, or which may interfere with it; give me a statement of all your operations, and count upon me to support you in the great work in which you are engaged, and which ought to arouse in all of us the most ardent zeal, since it is for the rescue of the country.

The Minister of the Interior,

LÉON GAMBETTA.

No. XII.

Letter of the Minister of the United States.

Sir,—Last night, at 11 o'clock, I received the communication, which you did me the honour of addressing me on the 5th instant, in which you inform me that, in virtue of a resolution adopted by the members of the Government of the National Defence, the Department of Foreign Affairs has been entrusted to you.

I, in my turn, have the satisfaction of announcing to you that I have received a telegram from my Government, commissioning me to recognize that of the National Defence as the Government of France.

Consequently, I am ready to enter into relations with this Government, and, if you are prepared, I am empowered to transact with it all the business belonging to my office.

In making this communication to your excellency, I beg you to accept for yourself and the members of the Government of the National Defence the congratulations of the Government and people of the United States; they have received with enthusiasm the news of the proclamation of this Republic in France without a drop of blood having been shed, and they will heartily and sympathetically associate in this great movement which they hope and believe will be fruitful in happy results for the French people and humanity at large.

The people of the United States, having enjoyed for nearly a century the innumerable benefits of a republican form of government, can only join in the efforts of the French people with the most profound interest, united to them as they are by bonds of a traditional friendship, since they seek to found institutions by means of which they will ensure both for the present generation and posterity the right of living and working for the happiness of all.

In conclusion, I would say to your excellency that I congratulate myself upon having as an intermedium between the Government of the National Defence and myself the distinguished man whose high character is so much appreciated in my

country, and who has devotedly consecrated all the strength of his intelligence to the cause of human liberty and that of free governments.—Yours, etc.

WASHBURN.

REPLY OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

SIR,—I consider it a good omen for the French Republic to have obtained as its first diplomatic support the recognition of the Government of the United States.

No one is more fitted than is the representative of a people who are giving to the world the salutary example of absolute liberty, to recall, in terms both just and noble, the invaluable benefits of a republican form of government.

You have founded your wise and powerful institutions upon independence and civic virtue, and, in spite of the terrible trials through which you have passed, you have preserved with steady firmness your faith in that great principle of liberty whence arise dignity, refinement, and prosperity.

The aspiration of all nations who are responsible for their destinies ought to be to follow in your footsteps; a nation can only be truly free on condition of being devoted, courageous, moderate, and of taking for its creed the love of work and respect for the rights of all. This is the programme of the Government which has just sprung up in France out of the painful crisis provoked by the follies of despotism; but while it is being founded, it can have but one thought, that of rescuing the country from the enemy. In this again, it has before it the example of your courage and perseverance.

You sustained a gigantic struggle and you conquered. Strong with the justice of our cause, repelling all spirit of conquest, only desiring our independence and our liberty, we too have the firm hope of success.

In the accomplishment of this task, we count upon the support of all worthy men and of all those governments which are interested in the triumph of peace. The adhesion of the Cabinet of Washington would of itself give us this confidence. The members of the Government beg me to express their gratitude to your Government.

For my own part, I am proud and glad of the opportunity given me to be the link between two peoples, united by so many glorious memories, and now by so many noble hopes; and I thank you for having expressed with so much *bienveillance* for me, all that I feel towards you, as well as my desire to consolidate more and more the relations of affectionate esteem, which must unite us for ever.—I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant, JULES FAVRE.

No. XIII.

LETTER FROM THE MINISTER OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION upon the Situation of the Inhabitants of Strasbourg.

To the Minister of Foreign Affairs,—

SIR,—The situation of the inhabitants of the town of Strasbourg has excited the sympathy of a large number of persons in Switzerland. The Federal Council announces to me that committees are formed in different parts of Switzerland for the purpose of coming to the assistance of the unfortunate population of the besieged town, and of offering them Swiss hospitality. These committees have solicited the concurrence of the Federal Government, which has taken the following decision:—

The Federal Department of the Interior is authorised to put itself into relation with the committees, and to second them effectually. It will provide for the reception of immigrants, and for their entertainment when private charity does not suffice. The department of tolls and of commerce will give directions for all baggage and wearing apparel to pass free. The committee is charged to send a delegation to Strasbourg, for the purpose of arranging with the commander of the place and the besieging forces with regard to the sortie and reception of the inhabitants of the town.

My Government, which charges me to announce these facts to your Excellency, informs me that the same communication is addressed to the Governments of the Confederation of Northern Germany, and of the Grand Duchy of Baden.—Yours, etc., KERN.

REPLY OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

PARIS, *September* 9, 1870.

SIR,—By the letter which I have had the honour of receiving from you, bearing yesterday's date, you have kindly acquainted me with the marks of sympathy excited in Switzerland by the inhabitants of Strasbourg, as well as the decision taken by the Federal Government to second the formation of committees of succour and of private charity. The Government of the National Defence is deeply grateful for this communication, and this feeling will be shared by all France. I will not attempt to express the sentiments that will inspire the heroic population of Strasbourg when they become acquainted with the noble conduct of the Swiss people, and with the generous course taken by the Federal Council. Such actions do honour to those with whom they originate; for us they are the most precious proof of the friendly dispositions of Switzerland, and nothing could more contribute to strengthen the bonds which have united it for so long with France, and particularly Alsace.

I beg you to express our deep gratitude to the Federal Council and all who join in the work of the committees.

JULES FAVRE.

No. XIV.

LETTER FROM THE MINISTER OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, announcing the recognition of the French Republic by the Swiss.

I am glad to inform you that the Federal Council has authorised me to enter immediately into official relations with the French Republic. Switzerland has always recognized the right of the free constitution of peoples. France having constituted itself a Republic with the applause of the whole nation, the Federal Council does not hesitate to apply this principle to the new Government of France.

The Federal Council is persuaded that the friendly relations which have so long been established between France and Switzerland will be maintained by the French Republic. The

Federal authorities, on their part, will contribute with all their heart to develop those relations. The love of liberty common to the two nations and the similarity between their political institutions will both strengthen them and tend to draw them yet closer in the bonds of sympathy.

The Federal Council represents all Switzerland when it expresses the sincere hope that the new sister Republic, sprung from a grave combination of circumstances, may, in a future not far distant, procure for France the benefits of an honourable peace, and consolidate liberty and democratic institutions. . . . . .

Reply of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The close friendship which unites France and Switzerland can but be fortified by similar political institutions; you, more fortunate than ourselves, have long enjoyed a liberty which is based upon wise customs and a severe national *morale*. Your forefathers gained it by heroic sacrifices, and you have kept it by your virtues; perhaps, too, it may have been protected by your admirable soil, which is both the most magical and formidable in Europe; but you have had the wisdom to people it with citizens armed from infancy, and able to be heroes when the moment arrives to defend it.

When France has passed through the terrible crisis brought on by the Empire, she will understand that it is time for her to emulate your example; she will be free and warlike, and the sword that she will keep in her hand, devoted henceforth to agriculture and industry, will be the symbol of respect, of right and integrity of the national soil.

I congratulate myself, amidst the painful preoccupations that fill my mind, to be able to console myself with these patriotic hopes. . . . . .

No. XV.

Letter from the Minister of Italy.

To the Minister of Foreign Affairs,—

September 8th, 1870.

Sir,—The King's Government . . . . has instructed me by telegraph to put myself immediately in communication with

you, and to entertain with the members of the Government such relations as are most conformable to the sympathies existing between our two countries. . . . . .

REPLY OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

No one is happier than myself to receive the communication of your excellency. As an old and sincere friend of Italy, proud of the numerous proofs of its affection, I attach the highest value to the assurances of sympathy which she conveys through you. To this satisfaction is added that arising from the fact that the duty of my office permits me to entertain relations with a person whose favour and noble qualities I have long appreciated. . . . . .

No. XVI.

LETTER FROM THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR TO THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

8th of September 1870.

SIR,—The Minister of Foreign Affairs in Spain has sent me by telegraph such instructions as are necessary for entering immediately into official relations with your excellency, and for expressing his desire to maintain the friendly relations which happily exist between Spain and France.

I think it hardly necessary to add, that all my efforts will be directed towards strengthening these relations and ensuring the prosperity and happiness of the two countries.

S. DE OLOZAGA.

REPLY OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR.

SIR,—It is very grateful to me to receive this proof of friendship and confidence from the representatives of a country which has so lately pointed out the road to liberty. I hope that we shall traverse this path together, closely united by common interests and hopes. It is just at the present moment, which

is so painful a one for France, that we see how wise would be that policy which should bind together three peoples really akin, only awaiting the signal of liberty to ratify their title to relationship. JULES FAVRE.

No. XVII.

LETTER FROM THE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES OF PORTUGAL TO THE MINISTER.

12th September 1870.

SIR,—His Majesty's Government, which I hastened to inform of the communication your excellency did me the honour to make on the 5th inst. relative to the constitution of the Government of the National Defence, and the nomination of your excellency to the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs, commands me to enter immediately into official relations with your excellency, and to express its desire to maintain with the Government of the National Defence those friendly relations which happily exist between Portugal and France.

I am very happy to be honoured with the office of intermedium between my government and the illustrious man now entrusted with the foreign business of France, and I shall make every effort to maintain and consolidate the best relations between our two Governments. . . .

(Signed) LANCASTRE.

REPLY OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

SIR,—The value which France has always attached to the friendly relations subsisting between her and your noble country permits me to give you the assurance that the Government of the National Defence will receive with satisfaction this good news.

For my own part, I am very happy to be entrusted with the duty of conveying this, and, thanking you for the kind sentiments you have expressed, I beg you to be assured that I shall direct my efforts to strengthening the bonds which unite our two countries. . . . . (Signed) JULES FAVRE.

No. XVIII.

DECREE CONVOKING THE ASSEMBLY OF ELECTORS FOR THE 16TH OF OCTOBER.

9th September 1870.

The Government of the National Defence to the French People.

Frenchmen,—When we proclaimed the Government of the National Defence four days ago we defined our mission.

The Empire had fallen; what had begun by an outrage ended by a desertion. We have only seized the helm which fell from powerless hands.

But Europe requires to be enlightened. She must know from incontrovertible proofs that the whole country is with us. It is necessary for the invader to encounter not only the obstacle of an immense city resolved to perish rather than surrender but an entire people, risen against him, organized, represented, —in short, by an assembly which shall be the true reflection of the mind of the country through all disasters.

Consequently, the Government of the National Defence decrees:—

ART. I. The Assembly of Electors is convoked for Sunday, October the 16th, for the purpose of electing a constituent National Assembly.

ART. II. The Elections will take place by ballot, conformably to the law of March 15, 1849.

ART. III. The number of members of the Assembly will be 750.

ART. IV. The Minister of the Interior is charged with the execution of the present decree.

Made at the Hôtel de Ville of Paris, 8th September 1870.

No. XIX.

"ORDRE DU JOUR" FROM GENERAL TROCHU TO THE NATIONAL GUARDS AND MOBILE GUARDS OF THE SEINE.

14th September 1870.

No general has ever had before him the grand spectacle which you present,—300 battalions of armed citizens, formed

of the entire population, and all applauding in concert the defence of Paris and liberty.

If those foreign nations which mistrust you, and the armies which are marching on you have heard this, they will have had the sentiment forced upon them, that misfortune has done more in a few weeks to raise the nation's soul than long years of enjoyment have done to degrade it. The spirit of devotion and sacrifice has taken possession of you, and already you owe to misfortune the benefit of union, and this will save you.

With our formidable army, the daily service of guard in Paris will not be less than 70,000 men. If the enemy pierced the *enceinte*, either by force or surprise, or by a breach, it would encounter barricades which are being prepared, and the heads of its columns would be overthrown by successive attacks from ten reserves *échelonnées*.

Have therefore perfect confidence, and be assured that the *enceinte* of Paris, defended by the persevering efforts of public spirit, and 300,000 guns, is inaccessible.

National Guards of the Seine, and Mobile Guards,—In the name of the Government of the National Defence, of which I am only the representative, I thank you for your patriotic solicitude for the precious interests with which you are entrusted.

Now, to the work in the nine sections of the defence! Order everywhere, calm everywhere, devotion everywhere!

And do not forget that you are entrusted with the preservation of order in the city of Paris during this crisis.

Prepare to suffer with constancy. Upon this condition you will conquer.

No. XX.

PROTEST OF THE INSTITUTE AGAINST THE BOMBARDMENT OF PARIS.

September 18th, 1870.

When, in 1849, a French army besieged Rome, it was careful to spare the buildings and works of art which ornament that town. In order to prevent all risk of reaching them by its projectiles, it even placed itself in unfavourable positions for attack.

In these times war is thus understood. It is no longer allowed as legitimate to extend destruction beyond the necessities of attack and defence; for instance, to subject buildings which do not in any way serve as fortresses to the effects of bomb-shells, etc.

Still less is it regarded as permissible to include in the work of ruin those monuments imprinted with the genius of humanity, which belong to humanity, which form, so to speak, the common patrimony of cultivated nations, and the sacred heritages which none can destroy, or encroach upon without impiety towards itself and the others.

A German army, in besieging Strasbourg, subjecting the city to a cruel bombardment, has seriously damaged its cathedral, and burned its valuable library.

Has such a deed, which has roused universal indignation, been the work of a secondary commander, since disavowed by his Sovereign and his country? We desire to think so. We revolt from the thought, that a people, among whom the sciences, letters, and arts are honoured, and which contributes to their glory, should refuse to carry this respect of the arts, sciences, and literature into war, when these are the very foundations of the civilisation of to-day.

And yet, we have ground for fearing that the armies, which now surround the capital of France, are preparing to subject to the chances of a bombardment the monuments with which it is graced, including as they do *chefs-d'œuvre* of every kind, the productions of the greatest minds of all ages and all countries (Germany included), in its picture galleries, its libraries, its palaces, its churches.

We repeat, we are unwilling to impute such a thought to the armies of Germany, to the Generals which conduct them, or to the Prince who marches at their head.

If, nevertheless, contrary to our expectations, this thought has been conceived; if it is to be carried out, we, members of the Institute of France, in the name of letters, science, and art, whose cause it is our duty to defend, we denounce such a design in the civilized world as an outrage against civilisation itself; we invoke the justice of history to pronounce sentence on it; we surrender it to the avenging reprobation of posterity.

We, met in General Assembly, including the five Academies which compose the Institute of France: viz., French Academy, Academy of Belles-Lettres, Academy of Sciences, Academy of the Fine Arts, Academy of Moral and Political Science, we have voted this protest unanimously.

"We address it to those of our colleagues who were not at this Assembly, whether they belong to France or to foreign nations, as well as to all united to us by sympathy of pursuit, whether Frenchmen or foreigners; we address it to them with the confidence that they will join in it, and place their signature to it with ourselves. Besides this, we address it to all academies; it will remain in their archives. Lastly, we publish it for the knowledge of all the civilized world.

Baltard, President of the Academy of Fine Arts, President of the Institute in 1870; E. Renan, President of the Academy of Belles-Lettres; Husson, President of the Academy of Moral and Political Science; Elie de Beaumont and Dumas, Secretaries of the Academy of Sciences.

Pont, Pellat, Egger, Dulaurier, E. Miller, J. Desnoyers, B. Hauréau, A. Couder, De Ségur, Faustin-Hélie, Lemaire, De Longpérier, A. Maury, Huillard-Bréholles, Taylor, Auber, d'Haussonville, E. Legouvé, J. P. Rossignol, Ch. Sainte-Claire, Deville, Ch. Giraud, A. Vallette, L. Matthieu, A. Caussin de Percival, C. Jourdain, Yvon Villarceau, E. Levasseur, General Morin, Payen, de Slane, A. Cochin, H. St. Claire Deville, Emile Augier, De La Fosse, De Quatrefages, E. Bersot, Roulin, Ed. Leblant, J. Dufaure, J. Pelletier, Blanchard, Chevreul, J. Sandeau, Ambroise Thomas, H. Bouley, Mignet, Guigniaut, Chasles, J. Decaisne, A. Dumont, Martinet, Vitet, Caro, Félicien David, H. Lefuel, L. Vaudoyer, H. Delaborde, Reybaud, Eug. Guillaume, Lenoir, Bussy, Liouville, Delisle, Patin, Cahours, Labrouste, Cavelier, Stan, Laugier, De Sacy, De Cailleux, Cuvillier-Fleury, Henri-quel, De Wailly, Cauchy, Milne Edwards, Baudrillart, Laugier, Barbier, B. Saint Hilaire, Bonassieux, Wallon, Balard, Vacherot, Duc, Bienaymé, Pils, Ch. Blanc, Félix Ravaisson, E. Renier, Brongniart, J. Simon, Wolowski, L. Cogniet, Bertrand, Wurtz, Brunet de Presle.

No. XXI.

CIRCULAR OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

17th September 1870.

SIR,—The decree by which the Government of the National Defence hastens the elections has a signification which cannot have escaped you, but which I wish to state. The resolution to convoke it as soon as possible resumes our whole policy. In accepting the perilous task imposed on us by the fall of the Imperial Government, we have had but one thought—that of defending our territory, saving our honour, and restoring to the country the power which belongs to it, which it alone can exercise. We should have preferred this to have been achieved without a transition, but the first necessity was to resist the enemy, and we have had to devote ourselves to this duty; all dispassionate judges will understand this.

We do not presume to ask this disinterestedness from Prussia; we take into account the sentiments produced among her people by the greatness of the losses incurred, and the natural excitement of victory. These sentiments explain the violence of the press, which we are far from confounding with the ideas of statesmen. The latter will hesitate to continue an impious war in which already more than 200,000 human creatures have been sacrificed, and by imposing on France conditions which she could not accept, they would be continuing it.

It is objected that the Government which France has given itself is without regular power to represent the country. We recognise this, and it is for this reason that we immediately call an assembly, freely elected.

We claim no other privilege besides that of giving our country our heart and life and yielding to her sovereign judgment. Therefore, it is not our authority of a day, which rises to meet the enemy, but it is immortal France.

France, freed from the shroud of the Empire, free, generous, ready to sacrifice herself for right and liberty, disavowing all policy of conquest, all violent propagandism, having no other ambition than to remain mistress of herself, to develop her moral and material strength, to unite with her neighbours in

working for the progress of civilisation; it is this France which, restored to free action, has just requested the cessation of the war, but which a thousand times prefers disasters to dishonour.

It is in vain for those who have brought upon the people this terrible scourge, to try to escape from the responsibility which crushes them, by falsely alleging that they yielded to the wish of the country. This calumny may deceive other nations who are not acquainted with our internal position; but there is no one in France who does not reject it as revolting to all good faith. The elections of 1869 had for their watchword—Peace and Liberty. The plebiscite itself appropriated it, confiding the mission of realizing it to the Imperial power. It is true that the majority in the Corps Législatif applauded the warlike declarations of the Duke de Gramont; but, some weeks before, it had given the same applause to the peaceful ones of M. Ollivier.

Without recrimination I must say that the majority, having sprung from the personal power, considered itself obliged to follow it docilely even through its most dangerous contradictions. It refused all earnest examination and voted its confidence; then the evil was without a remedy. Such is the fact. There is not a sincere man in Europe who can contradict it and affirm that France, if freely consulted, would have made war upon Prussia.

I do not argue from this that we are not responsible. We were wrong (and have cruelly expiated our fault) in tolerating a Government which ruined us. Now that it is overthrown, we recognise our obligation to repair the evil it has effected. But if that power with which it has so gravely compromised us take advantage of our misfortunes to overwhelm us, we shall offer to it a desperate resistance, and it will be well understood that it is the nation regularly represented by a freely-elected assembly which Prussia desires to destroy.

Now that the question thus resolves itself, all will do their duty. Fortune has been severe toward us: but she may again be favourable. Our resolution will ensure this. Europe begins to sympathize, and may bestir herself. The friendliness of the Cabinets consoles and honours us. They will, I am sure, be touched with the noble attitude of Paris, in the midst of so

many causes for formidable excitement. Grave, confident, ready for any sacrifices, the nation armed enters the arena without once looking back, keeping in view this great and simple duty, viz., the defence of home and independence.

I beg that you will convey these facts to your Government; it will see their importance and thus gain a true idea of our position.

The Vice-President of the Government of National Defence, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, JULES FAVRE.

No. XXII.

CIRCULAR OF THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR.

To the Prefect,—

SIR,—A Government decree dated the 16th of September orders a fresh election to take place in all the communes of France for the municipal councils; the number of councillors to be elected, and the mode of election, to be decided by the existing Legislation. It is my duty to inform you of the Government's intentions with respect to these elections, which, in the present state of the country, are required to prove the feeling of resistance which inspires all Frenchmen against the enemy, and also their resolution to found a free Government and to defend the country.

I told you, in a former circular, that, with regard to the National Defence, your first duty was to arouse the country from the long torpor which has been so fatal to her for twenty years; to encourage, and at the same time to discipline, the initiative spirit, to inspire those about you with energy, and to make all scattered forces converge towards the one great object which we all pursue—the rescue of the national soil. It is in order to supply these first needs and in order to second you in the task assigned to you, that the Government of the National Defence has decided to renew the municipal councils throughout the Republic. It is important for every citizen to understand this idea, which is the only true one, that the safety of the country can only be expected from the vigour and resolution of every Frenchman.

The municipal councils are the first and most natural organs of this supreme will of France: that is why, in every rank of power, we all need to be supported and seconded by assemblies directly proceeding from universal suffrage, and freely elected in the midst of the terrible events now passing in the country, caused by the imprudence and incapacity of the fallen Government. With the concurrence of such assemblies, the action of the Government of Defence will be more easy and efficacious. When we are associated with direct representatives of the populations, how great will be the strength accruing to the Government, and the guarantee for national safety.

Moreover, it must be considered, that one of the first acts of the Government of the National Defence, when it took possession of the supreme power, was to convoke the people in *comices* for the purpose of electing a National Assembly which may be everywhere, in spite of all disasters, the true reflection of the mind of the nation. The constitution of this assembly called by reason of circumstances to face the most formidable dangers and responsibilities, necessitates most imperiously that the election of its members be confided to the country, now free from the shackles with which the Empire has endeavoured to bind and corrupt universal suffrage. Hence arises the necessity of constituting new municipalities in each commune, which shall be free from all connexion with the ancient administration, and filled with the idea of the grandeur and difficulties of the present situation, so that the representatives of the people may bring into the new assembly the sincere resolutions of free France.

Lastly, the members of the Government of National Defence cannot forget (in the post confided to them by the people of Paris) those ideas and principles to the defence of which they have always consecrated their efforts, thus gaining the confidence of liberal and democratic France.

The establishment of free communes, the constitution of municipalities which shall be henceforth free from undue influence of the central power, and endowed with a separate life, will tend to remodel the country by remodelling its public institutions; and it is this which has always been the principal claims put forth by democratic opinion of which the opposition was the honoured organ. The opportunity now

occurs of applying these ideas and principles, and of giving a long-expected satisfaction to these legitimate claims; why should we not seize it? It is unquestionable that the municipal councils elected last August bear the mark of the old administration; that the choice was made in many cases under the pressure of former influences, whose yoke we must now shake off, and it will be admitted that, in every case, liberty insures a more sincere representation of a country's interests than administrative constraint; why should we not now call upon the citizens to revise the choice made by them under an administration now set aside, a choice which in no way corresponds to the new needs of France and the communes themselves.

Consider, that by the necessary and progressive extension of the duties of the municipal councils, those of the councillors will be much more important than heretofore. We want to lay the foundation of a real and complete reorganization of the forces of France; we require men convinced, like ourselves, of the superiority of this interest to every other; we desire to insure the independence of the municipal corps as far as it is reconcileable with the constitution of the nation, so that life and activity may circulate in every part of the social body. Is it not necessary to have in these councils of the communes men who, no longer bound to the much-abused authority of the prefects, may be ready to accept that responsibility which belongs to the members of councils elected in the full authority of universal suffrage.

Such are the considerations which have determined the Government of the National Defence to proceed without delay to the renewing of municipal councils throughout France. I beg you to reflect upon them and make them the text of the instructions and comments which may be required of you in the execution of this grave measure. It is not necessary for me to remind you that, in practice as in theory, liberty is the first principle of the Government and its agents, and, above all, electoral liberty. We now carry out the ideas we have always defended. Democratic and liberal France will recognise and applaud this, and the republicans, placed in power by a popular movement in the midst of perils which continue to increase

every hour, owed it to themselves, as well as to the noble cause they have always served, not to abandon those ideas—especially before an enemy which dares to boast of annihilating, with France, modern democracy and its principles.

Member of the Government of the National Defence, Minister of the Interior,

LÉON GAMBETTA.

No. XXIII.

PROCLAMATION OF M. LOUIS SIMON FROM TRÈVES TO HIS FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN.

6th September 1870.

The Empire has fallen. It has been replaced by a provisional Government, whose members voted against the war. I know several of them personally, and I know that they have always opposed all interference on the part of France in German affairs.

The war has lost its character of an aggressive one undertaken by Napoleon; it has become a defensive one maintained by the French nation. The provisional Government is under the necessity of continuing it so long as the German invasion compels it.

Germany claims guarantees against a repetition of attacks from France. The best guarantee is in the manifestation of German power, and the new thought which presides over the destiny of France.

If Germany, instead of returning injustice for injustice, show herself just, she will acquire in Europe, even in France, a consideration which, founded upon her strength, will form the best safeguard of her independence.

If, on the contrary, she presume to force Alsace and Lorraine from France, and to treat their inhabitants like a herd of cattle, in virtue of the right of the strongest, she will obtain none of the guarantees desired, but she will attack her own liberty.

Strasbourg (which, by royal order, has been so shamefully maltreated), and Alsace and Lorraine, are not only united to France apparently by the fortune of war and treaties of princes, but they are bound by three great revolutions.

The German people, too, must not forget that, in 1789, the French people conquered for themselves the rights of men; in 1830, constitutional administration; and in 1848, universal suffrage. Without the heroic aspirations of this noble nation, the workman, the peasant, and the tradesman would still be in the bonds of feudal privileges. It is clear that the privileged detest the French Republic far more than Napoleon; that, at the time of the *coup d'état*, they hailed him as the saviour of society.

But the German people, after they have laid down their arms in their arsenals, will have so much the greater difficulty in securing the triumph of their own claims, in that they will have permitted a kindred nation to be enfeebled.

Arbitrary rule and brute force are two-edged swords, which can only be used with danger to him who wields them. The German people will have so much the less chance of insuring the triumph of their right to dispose of their own fate, in that they will have violated this right in Alsace and Lorraine.

LOUIS SIMON (de Trèves).

No. XXIV.

DESPATCH FROM THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO M. THIERS, *Envoyé Extraordinaire* of the Republic.

16*th of September* 1870.

MY DEAR EX-COLLEAGUE,—Your despatch of the 14th, brought by a courier, was given me last night at the Hôtel de Ville, where the Government was assembled to deliberate. After having read it twice, I gave a summary of it to the members, who listened with deep interest. My colleagues particularly desire me to thank you for the devotion with which you place yourself at the disposal of the National Defence. They would have been delighted to hear that England, yielding to your counsels, had determined to act directly in our favour. Doubtless, we cannot be entirely indifferent either to the marks of sympathy she gives us, or to the slight aid which she procures. But we had a right to expect more. Our long-standing alliance, the close relations which unite us, her own interest, permitted us to hope from her an attitude

and a tone which would have brought Prussia to reflect. It is in vain for her to entrench herself in her insulated position. She plays too important a part in the world not to be seriously affected by a state of things which shakes the whole of Europe, and condemns it to long and terrible convulsions.

At this moment, so decisive and painful a one for France, we may guess the new future which begins to be traced out. We are severely expiating our faults, and our patriotic grief makes us consider the chastisement a bitter one. But, even while murmuring, we ought to preserve, as much as possible, the impartiality of our judgment, and resolutely to seek an issue from the labyrinth into which we are madly cast. Whatever may happen, whether we be victors or vanquished, we have to reform ourselves radically. We have succumbed much less to numbers, than to the weight of a destructive system. We have deeply erred in forgetting that there is but one true force in the world—moral force. It is from this that material force proceeds, especially in times when science has so large a share in affairs. We have abdicated to the profit of incapacity; from the top of the ladder to the bottom, all has been worm-eaten. Everything is therefore to remake, and we must entirely alter our course. If it be so, we must all, likewise, modify our exterior policy—pursuing that which grows out of ideas that draw nations together, rather than one based upon personal ties or calculations of equilibrium. We can no longer oppose the unity of Germany; but we can bring this unity to its true form, by being both free and well defended upon our own soil. With this policy, we have little to fear from her enterprises; but we must obtain the alliance of those nations which are interested in restraining her.

I return to England, and your conversations with Lord Granville and Mr. Gladstone. In reading them I felt that you are the real Minister of Foreign Affairs, and I congratulated myself for having had the happy thought of enlisting your talents in the service of the Government. No one would have been listened to like yourself; no other could have represented to the Queen's Ministers the great but severe truths of which you have reminded them. You have not completely succeeded in drawing them from their inertia; but you have moved and

interested them; and the good offices they have promised are, thanks to you, tolerably decisive.

All the arguments, stated so clearly in your letter, formed a satisfactory reply to the interested objections which are repeated at this time from one end of Europe to the other; and I regret not having tried to accomplish this task myself before you. I had prepared a circular with this object, but the Government begged me to adjourn its publication.

We are correct in affirming that the nation did not desire the war; the Chamber desired it no more than the nation. The elections of 1869 had for their watchword "Liberty and Peace." The plebiscite had the same meaning, and only added —the consecration of the power to the Emperor. Nation and Chamber were deceived. Once bound, they followed; honour did the rest.

Now we return sincerely to our programme, and we shall change it no more. Nevertheless, two events might force us to renounce it,—a humiliating peace, or the return of a Bonaparte. Mutilated or humbled, France would think of revenge. If intrusted to a Bonaparte, she would again be drawn into war. England understands this, and I do not despair that these inductions may prevail elsewhere. If Prussia seeks this difficulty for us, she takes refuge in a pretext. We offer to her the vote of an Assembly; she can have no better guarantee, nor a more regular one. This point must be insisted on, and you have done it most happily. Prussia is opposed to the nation; we do not pretend to represent it; we are but its sentries mounting guard at its gates, and willing to be forgotten when the nation is consulted. The means of appealing to the nation must therefore be facilitated. It would be monstrous if, in spite of the truce (at least moral) caused by the fall of the Empire, all explanation were refused, and the horrible human massacres were coolly recommenced. This is why I am resolved upon any sacrifice in attempting to make what I consider the voice of reason heard. I am convinced that Paris will not fail; her courage is great. We shall cover the streets with barricades, and we shall all fight. But before this final struggle, let us spare no effort to make the cause of humanity to triumph. As you have said,—My blood boils at the idea of crossing

Prussian lines. The image of our vanquished legions, our officers and soldiers heroically fallen, will be always before my eyes; but I shall be supported, I hope, by the greatness of the duty. This city of Paris, which I would not leave, I love as the heart of France, as France herself; and if I, who am so little prepared for this duty, could contribute towards saving it from a siege or bombardment, I would die with joy, having obtained the highest reward of all my life. You are, therefore, right in saying that I am willing to go to the Prussian head-quarters, if access be possible. Thanks to you, I shall be preceded by a good word from England, and this may bring me good fortune. I am therefore ready. The enemy's lines are being formed, and it appears they intend to attack without further preliminary. If this letter finds you still in London, urge still further your request for the assistance of England in the accomplishment of my mission. I attach great importance to this, and I believe Lord Lyons is of my opinion. You know how obliging he has been towards me. Whatever may happen, I shall always be grateful.

Accept, my dear ex-colleague, the expression of my affectionate regards. (Signed) JULES FAVRE.

No. XXV.

NOTICE OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S JOURNEY TO FERRIÈRES.

September 22, 1870.

Before the siege of Paris commenced, the Minister of Foreign Affairs desired to know the intentions of Prussia, who has been till now silent.

We proclaimed our own intentions the day after the revolution of the 4th of September.

We said (without resentment against Germany, having always condemned the war which the Emperor made in an interest exclusively dynastic), "Let us put an end to this struggle, which is decimating peoples for the profit of the ambitious. We will accept equitable conditions of peace. We will not yield an inch of territory, nor a stone of our fortresses."

To these overtures Prussia replies by demanding Alsace and Lorraine by right of conquest.

She will not even consent to consult the populations; she would dispose of them like a herd of cattle.

And when it is proposed to convoke an Assembly, which will constitute a definitive power, and will vote peace or war, then Prussia demands, as a preliminary condition of an armistice, the occupation of the besieged towns, the fort of Mont Valerien, and the garrison of Strasbourg as prisoners of war.

Let Europe judge of this!

For ourselves, the enemy is now unmasked. He places us between duty and dishonour; our choice is made.

Paris will resist to the last. The departments will come to her help, and, God helping us, France will be saved.

No. XXVI.

Report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to his Colleagues.

21st September 1870.

My dear Colleagues,—The close union of all the citizens, and particularly that of the members of the Government, is more than ever a necessity of public safety. Every act ought to cement this. That which I have just accomplished was inspired by this sentiment; it will have this result; I have had the honour of explaining it to you in detail; that does not suffice. We are a Government of the people. If, at the moment of action, secrecy be indispensable, the fact, when once accomplished, ought to be made known. We are nothing except by the opinion of our fellow-citizens; this must judge us; and, in order to do so, they must know all we do.

I believed it to be my duty to go to the head-quarters of the enemy; I have been. I have given you an account of the mission I took upon myself. I am about to announce to my country the reasons which determined me, the object I proposed to myself, and that which I think I have gained.

It is not necessary to recall the policy inaugurated by us, and which the Minister of Foreign Affairs was particularly charged

with formulating. We are, above all, men of peace and liberty. To the last we opposed the war which the Imperial Government undertook in a dynastic interest, and, when that Government fell, we declared more energetically than ever for a peace policy.

This declaration we made when, by the criminal folly of one man and his counsellors, our armies were destroyed; our glorious Bazaine and his valiant soldiers were blockaded in Metz; Strasbourg, Toul, Phalsbourg were destroyed by bomb-shells; the victorious enemy were marching on the capital. Never was there a more cruel situation; yet it did not cause, in the minds of the people, a thought of yielding; and we believed that we were their faithful interpreter in laying down clearly this condition,—Not an inch of our territory, not a stone of our fortresses.

If therefore at that juncture, when so important an event had occurred as the overthrow of him who promoted the war, Prussia had desired to treat upon condition of an indemnity, peace would have been made; it would have been welcomed as an immense benefit; it would have been the sure pledge of reconciliation between two nations which nothing but an odious policy has fatally divided.

We hoped that interest and the cause of humanity would have gained this—the grandest of victories; for it would have been the commencement of a new era, and the statesmen who might have attached their names to it would have had for their guide philosophy, reason, and justice; and their recompense would have been found in the blessings and prosperity of the peoples.

These are the ideas under the influence of which I undertook the dangerous task you confided to me. I had first of all to discover what were the dispositions of the European Cabinets, and to endeavour to gain their support. The Imperial Government had either completely forgotten to do anything of the kind, or had failed. It engaged in the war without alliance, without serious negotiation; all around was hostility or indifference; it thus reaped the bitter fruit of a policy which was offensive to every neighbouring State, either by its threats or its pretensions.

Hardly had we entered the Hôtel de Ville than a diplomatist, whose name it is not important to reveal, requested to enter into relations with us. On the morrow, your Minister received the representatives of all the powers. The republic of the United States, the Swiss Republic, Italy, Spain, Portugal, officially recognised the French republic. The other Governments authorized their agents to open such official communications with us as should permit us to enter into preliminary conferences.

I should make this statement too long were I to recount in detail the short but instructive history of the negotiations that followed. I think I may affirm that it is not without value as testifying to our moral credit.

I confine myself to saying that we have everywhere met with honourable sympathies. My object was to combine them, and to determine those powers which had signed the league of the neutrals to intercede directly with Prussia, taking for the basis of peace the conditions I have laid down. Four of these powers offered to do so; I have testified my gratitude to them in the name of my country, but I wanted the concurrence of the others. One promised me an individual action, reserving to itself the liberty of choosing what course to take; the other proposed to be my intermedium with Prussia; it even went a step further. At the persuasion of the special envoy of France, it recommended my proposals to Prussia. I requested much more, but I refused no concurrence, knowing that the interest shown toward us was a force not to be disregarded.

Moreover, time was going fast; each hour brought the enemy nearer. A prey to a violent emotion, I had promised myself not to let the siege of Paris commence before making a last effort, even if I stood alone. The need for this is easy to be seen. Prussia kept silence, and no one would interrogate her. This situation was untenable; it gave the enemy an opportunity of casting the responsibility of the continued struggle upon us; it condemned us to silence as to our own intentions. It was necessary to break through this. In spite of my repugnance to the task, I resolved to take advantage of the kind offices which were tendered to me, and, on the 10th of September, a telegram was sent to M. Bismarck, asking if he would agree to an interview respecting conditions of a treaty. His first reply

spoke of the difficulty arising from the irregularity of our Government. Still the Chancellor of the Northern Confederation did not insist upon this, and asked what guarantees we gave for the execution of a treaty. This second difficulty having been removed, I was obliged to go further. A proposition was made to send a courier, which I accepted. At the same time we telegraphed directly to Count Bismarck, and the Prime Minister of the nation which acted as our intermedium said to our special envoy that France alone could act; he added, that it would be desirable for me not to hesitate to go to the headquarters of the Prussian army. Our envoy, who knew my feelings on the subject, replied that I was ready for any sacrifice in the accomplishment of my duty; that few things could be more painful than to cross the enemy's lines in search of the conqueror, but that he supposed that I should resign myself to it. Two days after, the courier returned. After many obstacles, he had seen the Chancellor, who had said that he would willingly appoint an interview with me.

I should have preferred waiting for a direct reply to the telegram of our intermedium; it had not yet arrived. The investment of Paris was completed. I could no longer hesitate. I resolved to depart.

It was important that, while it was taking place, this step should not be made public. I recommended secrecy, and I was painfully surprised, on my return yesterday, to find that this was not adhered to. A great piece of imprudence had been committed. A journal, *L'Electeur Libre*, already disavowed by the Government, took advantage of it; an inquiry is set on foot, and I hope to be able to suppress this double indiscretion.

I had carried this scruple so far that I observed it even with regard to you, my dear colleagues. I did not decide upon this without much pain. But I knew your patriotism and affection. I was certain of being forgiven. I yielded to what I believed to be an imperious necessity. On a former occasion I had spoken to you of my scruples, and I told you that my conscience would never be at peace until I had done all that was humanly possible to stop this abominable war in an honourable manner. Remembering the conversation provoked by this overture on my part, I feared those objections, and I was resolved;

besides, I wanted to be free from all engagement in speaking to Count Bismarck, so as to have the right to make none. I confess this to you sincerely; I confess it to the country, in order to take from you a responsibility which I alone incur. If the course I have taken is an erroneous one, I alone must bear the penalty. I had, however, informed the Minister of War, who was pleased to give me an officer to conduct me to the outposts. We did not know the situation of the head-quarters. It was supposed to be at Grosbois. We went towards the enemy by the Porte de Charenton.

I pass over all the details of this painful journey; they are full of interest, but would be out of place here. Being conducted to Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, where was to be found the general who commanded the 6th corps, I learned rather late in the afternoon that the head-quarters were at Meaux. The general, with great politeness, proposed to send thither an officer with the following letter which I had prepared for Count Bismarck:—

"To Count Bismarck,—

"SIR,—I have long thought that, before seriously engaging in hostilities under the walls of Paris, an honourable arrangement ought to be attempted. The person who had the honour to see your Excellency two days ago informs me that a similar desire has been expressed by you. I have come to the outposts to place myself at your disposal. I am now waiting for your Excellency to send me word when and where I may have the honour of conferring some minutes with you.—I have the honour to be, the obedient servant of your Excellency,

"JULES FAVRE.

"*September* 18, 1870."

We were separated by a distance of forty-eight kilomètres. The next morning at six o'clock, I received the following reply:—

"MEAUX, 18*th September* 1870.

"I have just received the letter which your Excellency has had the goodness to write me, and I shall be very glad if you will do me the honour of coming to see me to-morrow, here, at Meaux.

The bearer of this note, Prince Biron, will arrange for your Excellency to be guided across our lines.—I have the honour to be, the obedient servant of your Excellency, DE BISMARCK."

At nine o'clock the escort was ready, and I set out with it. Having arrived near Meaux, towards three o'clock in the afternoon I was stopped by an aide-de-camp, who came to tell me that the Count had left Meaux with the King for Ferrières.[1] We had passed each other: by both retracing our steps we should meet.

I turned back and went into the yard of a farm entirely pillaged, as were nearly all the houses on the route. At the end of an hour M. de Bismarck joined me. It was difficult to talk in such a place. A habitation, the château de la Haute-Maison, belonging to Count de Rillac, was not far distant; thither we went; and the conversation took place in a room where were scattered in disorder all kinds of débris.

I should like to report this conversation entire, as I dictated it the next day to a secretary. Each detail has its importance. But I can only give a sketch of it here.

First of all I declared the object of my journey. Having, by my circular, made known the intentions of the Government, I desired to know those of the Prussian Prime Minister. It seemed to me impossible for two nations to continue a terrible war without explaining themselves,—this war being one which, in spite of its advantages, would inflict the severest sufferings upon the conqueror. Having originated with one man, the war had no longer any reason for existing, now that France had again become her own mistress; I guaranteed her love for peace, as well as her firm resolve not to accept any condition which might render this peace only a short and menacing truce.

Count Bismarck replied that if he were convinced that such a peace were possible, he would sign it at once. He allowed "that the opposition had always opposed the war. But the power which that opposition represents is most precarious. If in a few days Paris is taken, it will be overthrown by the populace."

[1] In the magnificent palace of Baron de Rothschild.

I interrupted him hastily to tell him that the population of Paris was not a mob, but one which was intelligent, devoted, which knew our intentions, and which would not become an aid to the enemy by hindering our mission of defence. As for our power, we were ready to place it in the hands of the Assembly already convoked by us.

"That Assembly," replied the Count, "will have designs which it is impossible for us to know at present. But if it be really French in sentiment, it will desire war. You will no more forget the capitulation of Sedan than Waterloo, or Sadowa, which was of minor importance to you." Then he insisted at length upon the clear intention of the French nation to attack Germany and to take part of its territory. "From the time of Louis XIV. to Napoleon III. its tendencies have not changed, and when the war was announced, the Corps Législatif received the words of the Minister with applause."

I told him that the majority of the Corps Législatif had some weeks before applauded peace; that this majority, chosen by the Emperor, unhappily thought itself obliged to yield to him blindly; but that the nation, twice consulted, viz., in the elections of 1869 and at the vote of the plebiscite, had energetically adhered to a policy of peace and liberty.

The conversation was prolonged on this subject, the Count maintaining his opinion, while I defended mine; and as I pressed him to name his conditions, he unequivocally replied that the security of his country commanded him to keep the territory which guaranteed it. He repeated several times, "Strasbourg is the key of the house; I must have it." I begged him to be yet more explicit. "It is useless, he objected, since we cannot understand each other; it is an affair to be arranged afterwards." I begged him to do it at once; then he said that the two departments of Bas and Haut Rhin, a part of that of Moselle, with Metz, Chateau-Salins, and Soissons, were indispensable, and that he could not give them up.

I showed him that the assent of the populations of these places was more than doubtful, and that European public right did not allow him to pass by that:—"True," replied he. "I know very well that they do not wish to have anything to do with us. They will prove a troublesome possession; still we

cannot but take them. I am sure that before very long we shall have a fresh war with you; we wish to have every advantage."

I exclaimed, as I was forced to do, against such a course. I said that he appeared to forget two important elements of the discussion. In the first place, Europe might think these pretensions exorbitant, and oppose them; and besides, modern ideas of justice, as well as the progress of civilisation, were entirely in antipathy to such exactions. I added that, as for us, we should never submit to them. We might perish as a nation, but we could not dishonour ourselves. Besides, the country alone was competent to pronounce upon a cession of territory. We do not doubt of its sentiments, but we wish to consult it. Prussia therefore confronts the nation; and to be plain, it is clear that, being led away by the intoxication of victory, she desires the destruction of France.

The Count protested against this, still taking refuge behind the absolute necessity for a national guarantee. I continued: "If it be not an abuse of force on your part, hiding secret designs, let us call the Assembly; we will restore to it the authority which is now in our hands; it will name a definitive Government which will judge of your conditions.

"In order to execute this plan," replied the Count, "an armistice would be necessary, and I will not have one at any price."

The conversation became more and more painful. It was almost evening. I requested of M. Bismarck a second interview at Ferrières, where he was to pass the night, and we parted.

Desiring to fulfil my mission to the end, I wanted to speak again of several questions which we had touched upon, and to conclude. Thus, upon meeting the Count at nine o'clock in the evening, I told him that as the information I had come to gain from him would have to be communicated to my Government and the public, I would sum up the conversation, so as not to publish anything which was not quite clear to each of us. "Do not take that trouble," said he; "I deliver it to you entire; I see no objection to every word being made known." Then we resumed the discussion, which lasted until midnight. I particularly dwelt upon the necessity of convoking an Assem-

bly. The Count seemed to allow himself to be convinced by degrees, and returned to the question of the armistice. I asked a fortnight. We discussed the conditions. He explained himself in a very incomplete manner, intending to consult the King. Our interview was consequently adjourned for the morrow at eleven o'clock.

I have little more to say; for, while reproducing this painful narrative, my mind is agitated with the same emotions which tortured me during those three days, and I hasten to conclude. I was at the château of Ferrières at eleven o'clock. The Count came to me at a quarter to twelve, and named the conditions which he required for the armistice; they were written in German; he communicated them to me verbally.

He demanded as a pledge the occupation of Strasbourg, Toul, and Phalsbourg, and since, in answer to his inquiry, I had said the evening before that the Assembly ought to meet in Paris, he required, in that case, a fort commanding the city . . . Mont Valerien for instance.

I interrupted him by saying, "It is much more simple to ask us to give you Paris. How should a French Assembly deliberate under your cannon? I have said that I should faithfully repeat our conversation to the members of the Government, but indeed I do not know if I dare tell them that you have made such a proposition."

"Let us try another arrangement," replied he. I then spoke of holding the Assembly at Tours, taking no pledge with regard to Paris.

He proposed to speak of it to the King, and returning to the subject of the occupation of Strasbourg, he added: "The city is about to fall into our hands; it is only a question of engineers' calculation. Thus, I ask that the garrison surrender themselves prisoners of war." At these words, I writhed with pain, and rising, I exclaimed, "You forget that you speak to a Frenchman; it would be an act of cowardice to sacrifice a heroic garrison which inspires the admiration of the whole world; and I do not promise to mention that you have proposed such a condition."

The Count replied that he did not intend to wound me; that he acted conformably to the laws of war; and that, at most, if the King gave his consent, this article might be modified.

The Count returned at the end of a quarter of an hour. The King accepted the arrangement with regard to Tours, but insisted upon the garrison of Strasbourg being made prisoners of war.

My forbearance was at an end, and I feared for a moment lest I should give way. I turned my back to check the tears which blinded my eyes; and, excusing myself to the Count for this involuntary weakness, I took my leave with the following words:—

"Count Bismarck, I was mistaken in coming here: I do not regret it. I have suffered enough to absolve me in my own eyes; besides, I came to do what I considered a duty. I will report to my Government all you have said, and if it thinks proper to send me back to you, however hard it may be, I shall return. I am grateful for the condescension you have shown me, but I fear nothing can be done but to leave events to take their course. The population of Paris is courageous and resolved to make any sacrifices; its heroism may change the course of events. If you have the honour of conquering it, you will not subdue it. The entire nation shares in this feeling. So long as we find in it an element of resistance we shall fight. It will be an indefinite struggle between two peoples who ought to be allied. I had hoped for another solution: I depart in sorrow, but full of hope."

I will add nothing to this account, which speaks for itself. I may conclude by telling you what is, in my opinion, the import of these interviews. I sought for peace; I met with an inflexible resolve for conquest and war. I requested an opportunity for interrogating France, which might be represented by a freely elected Assembly. Count Bismarck replied by showing me the Caudine forks under which she would have first of all to pass. I do not recriminate; I confine myself to a statement of facts, and signalize them to my country and all Europe. I ardently desired peace. I do not hide this; and the sight which those three days afforded me of the misery of our unhappy country so much augmented this desire that I had to call to my aid all the courage I possessed in order not to fail in accomplishing my task. I desired an armistice no less; and I confess I did so that the nation might be consulted upon the formidable question which is placed before us.

Now you know the preliminary conditions to which the enemy would have you submit. Like myself, you have been unanimously of the opinion, and that without discussion, that it is necessary to reject such humiliating terms. I have the profound conviction that, in spite of the sufferings which France is enduring, and which she sees before her, she will confirm our resolution, and expressed her feelings when I wrote the following despatch to M. Bismarck, which closes the negotiation :—

"To Count Bismarck,—

"I have faithfully stated to my Government the declaration I received from your Excellency. I regret to inform your Excellency that the Government found it impossible to admit your propositions. It would accept an armistice having for its object the election of a National Assembly, but it cannot subscribe to the conditions which your Excellency lays down. As for myself, I am conscious of having done all in my power to stop bloodshed and to insure peace between our two nations, to whom it would have been a great benefit. But I am compelled to bow before an imperious duty, which commands me not to sacrifice the honour of my country, determined as she is to resist energetically. I unreservedly unite in her resolve and that of my colleagues. God, who judges us, will decide our destinies. I have faith in His justice.—I have the honour to be, etc., JULES FAVRE."

I have done what I could to accomplish my mission, my dear colleagues, and you think with me that if I have failed, the attempt has not been altogether in vain. It has proved that we have not deviated from our principles. As at the first, we heartily detest a war which we condemned before it took place; as then, we accept it rather than dishonour. We have done more than this: we have put an end to the silence in which Prussia entrenched herself, and which Europe did not help us to break.

On entering our territory, she proclaimed to the world that she attacked Napoleon and his soldiers, but that she respected the nation. We know now what must be thought of this. Prussia demands three of our departments, two fortresses—one containing 100,000, the other 75,000 souls,—and from eight to ten

other fortified towns. She knows that the populations which she wants to force from us would repel her; nevertheless she seizes them, opposing with the sword the protestations of their civic liberty and moral dignity.

Of the people, who ask the opportunity of consulting among themselves, she demands the guarantee of their cannon placed on Mont Valerien, and commanding the very Hall of Assembly where our deputies will vote. This is all we know, and this is what I am authorized to tell you. Let the country hear us and rise, either to disavow us when we counsel it to resist to the last, or to submit with us to this last and decisive trial. Paris is resolved.

The departments are being organized, and are coming to our aid.

The last word is not yet pronounced in this struggle, in which might is arrayed against right. Our constancy alone will insure the victory to justice and liberty.

Accept, my dear colleagues, the assurance of my sympathy with the cause to which we are all devoted.

The Vice-President of the Government of National Defence,
Minister of Foreign Affairs,

JULES FAVRE.

No. XXVII.

SPEECH OF M. JULES FAVRE TO THE OFFICERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD upon the "Place de l'Hôtel de Ville."

8th September 1870.

SIRS,—This day is an encouraging one for the defence, for it asserts once more, in the clearest way, our firm resolve to remain united to save the country. This intrepid unity, in which all are devoted to one thought, is the very soul of the Government founded by you on the 4th of September. To-day you consecrate afresh its legitimacy. You intend to maintain it, in order that with your aid it may deliver the national soil from the foreigner. On its side, it promises you to pursue this object to the death; and, in order to attain so noble an end, it is determined to act with firmness towards any who might attempt to hinder it.

Paris, by an unfortunate accident, has the honour of having the effort of the enemy concentrated upon herself. She is the fortress of France; she will save France by means of your devotion, your courage, your civic virtues; and if any one tries to sow in her midst the germs of division, your good sense will stifle them without trouble. We should all have been glad to give to the municipal authorities the regular basis of a free election; but we can all understand, that while the Prussians threaten the city, its inhabitants can but be on the ramparts, and even beyond them, where they burn to go and attack the enemy. When they have conquered, they will come and vote; and, while I am speaking, do you hear the appeal which interrupts me? It is the thunder of cannon, telling us all what is our duty.

Sirs, one word more. Let me add a fraternal counsel to the thanks of the Government which is your own work, your heart and soul, which only exists through you and for you. Let not this day produce in your minds any thought of rage, or even of animosity. In this great and noble population we have no enemies. I do not think we can call even those our adversaries who are the cause of my having the honour to be in your midst. They have been led astray, let us bring them back by our patriotism. The lesson will not be lost upon them; they will see by your example how noble it is to be united in the service of the country, and henceforth they, with you, will fly to its defence. JULES FAVRE.

No. XXVIII.

NOTE GIVEN TO GENERAL BURNSIDE, 10TH OCTOBER 1870.

9th October 1870.

The undersigned, Minister of Foreign Affairs, had the honour of receiving a visit, on the 3d of October, from General Burnside and his Excellency M. Washburn, Minister of the United States residing at Paris. They came from the head-quarters, and intended returning thither. They made their kind offer in the hope of establishing, if possible, a common feeling between France and Prussia as to the cessation of the war; and

they asked the undersigned if he did not think it opportune to give them a note upon the subject. While thanking them for their cordial intervention, the undersigned did not think it in his power to give them such a note; but the General having asked if he consented to allow his conversation to be reported to Count Bismarck, the undersigned accepted this offer, and briefly indicated two points which it was important to examine. Namely, the conclusion of peace upon the basis of preserving intact the French territory; and an armistice, with the object of convoking an Assembly.

On the 9th of October, the undersigned received another visit from General Burnside, accompanied as before. He informed the undersigned that he had had four interviews with Count Bismarck, who had consulted the King; and he then proceeded to give the substance of the conversations which took place at these interviews.

After having apparently put aside all idea of an armistice, the Count again took up the subject; he saw the necessity of convoking an Assembly, but he required the following conditions:—

1st, Its duration must be of forty-eight hours, in order to make the elections. Free communication would be allowed between Paris and Tours.

2d, The consent of Prussia to the free elections in the invaded departments, except those of Alsace and Lorraine.

3d, The armistice not to apply to the operations before Metz.

4th, Refusal of revictualling during the armistice.

The undersigned, while repeating the expression of his gratitude for the benevolent intentions of the General, did not conceal from him that he considered these conditions unacceptable; but nevertheless, if only for the sake of showing deference towards him who had intervened, he promised to consult the Government and to make known its decision.

After hearing the report of the undersigned, the Government was unanimously of opinion, with regard to the first point, that a period of forty-eight hours was perfectly useless for the elections. In the state in which the war has placed all ways of communication in France, the elections and meeting of the Assembly would require a much longer delay. The proposed armistice for

the purpose of consulting the nation would be entirely useless if it were not of longer duration. This armistice ought to be prolonged until a decision is come to by the Assembly.

Upon the second point, the Government could not admit the exclusion of Alsace and Lorraine from the right of being represented in the Assembly, for two conclusive reasons. First, it would be tacitly consenting to the cession of these provinces; second, it would be accepting, contrary to all true ideas of the public right, the doctrine that populations can be disposed of without their consent.

Upon the third point the armistice is to be or not to be. If it is agreed upon, it will apply to all the military operations of the belligerents.

Upon the fourth point the armistice necessitates revictualling, without which it favours the interest of the besieger exclusively.

The undersigned, in stating briefly these considerations, which are, in his opinion, decisive, wished firmly to establish that—by the kind offices of General Burnside, a proposition was made with the object of arriving at a future arrangement—the Government of the National Defence only rejects it because it is subject to such conditions as render its execution impossible.

No. XXIX.

Circular of Count Bismarck.

27th September 1870.

The report addressed by M. Jules Favre to his colleagues of the 21st instant, relative to his interview with me, places me under the necessity of making such a communication to your Excellency as will give you an exact idea of the purport of these interviews. I must confess that for the most part M. Favre has endeavoured to make an exact statement of what passed between us. If he has not entirely succeeded it must be attributed to the length of our conference and the circumstances under which the interviews took place. I must nevertheless raise objections to the general tendency of his statement, and

insist upon the fact that the principal subject we had to discuss was not that of the conclusion of a treaty of peace, but of an armistice which might precede a treaty. With regard to the demands we might have to make before signing a definitive treaty of peace, I expressly declared to M. Jules Favre that I refused to enter into the subject of the new frontier claimed by us until the principle of a cession of territory had been openly recognised by France. As a consequence of this declaration, I mentioned as conformable to our intentions the formation of a new department of La Moselle, with the circumscription of Sarrebourg, Chateau-Salins, Sarreguenimes, Metz, and Thionville; but at the same time I did not in the least renounce our right to make in a treaty of peace new stipulations for compensation proportionable to the sacrifices imposed upon us by the prolongation of the war.

Strasbourg, spoken of by M. Favre as the key of the house, an expression leaving it doubtful if France were the house in question, was expressly declared by me to be the key of our house, which, consequently, we desired not to leave in foreign hands.

Our first conversation did not exceed the bounds of an academic conversation, upon the present and the past; the substance of it is to be found in M. Jules Favre's declaration that he was ready to cede "all the money we possess," while he refused to admit the idea of a cession of territory. When I spoke of a cession of territory as being altogether indispensable, he declared that the negotiations of peace would have no chance of success, and maintained that it would be both humiliating and dishonouring for France to cede any portion of territory whatever. I could not convince him that conditions which France had imposed on Italy, and demanded of Germany, without a war with either country, conditions which France would have imposed upon us if we had been vanquished, and which have been the inevitable consequence of nearly all wars, even in modern times, could not be a disgrace for a country which succumbed after a courageous resistance, and I added that the honour of France did not differ essentially from that of other nations. I did not succeed in persuading M. Favre that the surrender of Strasbourg implied no more dishonour to France than the cession of Laudau and Sarrelouis, and that the violent

and unjust conquests of Louis XIV. were no more closely bound to the honour of France than those of the first Republic or the first Empire.

At Ferrières our conference took a more practical turn, when we discussed exclusively the question of an armistice, a fact which refutes the allegation that I would under no circumstances accept an armistice. The manner in which M. Favre has made me say, with regard to this question and others, "An armistice is necessary, and I will not have one at any price," and other like contradictions, force me to rectify these assertions, and to add that in such conversations I have never used an expression implying that I personally desire, exact, or approve anything whatever. I always speak of the intentions and demands of the Government of which I am the representative.

In this conversation both parties agreed to consider the necessity of giving the French nation an opportunity of choosing representatives who alone would be in a position to grant to the present Government power to conclude a peace sanctioned by international right, as a motive for an armistice. I called attention to the fact that an armistice was always a military disadvantage for an army engaged in a victorious march, that in the present case it would be a most important gain in point of time for the defence of France and the reorganization of the army, and that consequently we could not grant an armistice if equivalent military advantages were not offered to us. Apropos of this, I mentioned the reduction of the fortresses which hindered our communications with Germany, for a truce which would prolong the period during which we should have to feed our army, must include, as its preliminary conditions, such concessions as would facilitate the transportation of food.

Strasbourg, Toul, and other places of less importance, formed the subjects of this discussion. With regard to Strasbourg, I remarked, that the fort having been entered, the taking of the town would soon follow; and that we thought the military situation would render the reduction of the garrison necessary, while it would be allowed to those who guarded the other towns to leave with the honours of war.

Another difficult question related to Paris. As we had entirely surrounded the city, we could only permit the entrance of fresh provisions on condition that they should not weaken our military position, nor prolong the time necessary for reducing the city by famine. After having consulted the military authorities, I offered, by order of his Majesty the King, the following alternatives relative to Paris :—

Either a part of the line of defence around Paris must be conceded to us by the reduction of a part commanding the defence,—and in this case we are ready to permit free communication with, and not to hinder the reprovisioning of the city,—

Or they could not concede the position before Paris ; but, in this case, we could not consent to abandon the investment ; and we must insist upon the continuation *in statu quo* of the military position before the town, since otherwise we should be confronted by Paris, newly reinforced by arms and food.

M. Favre expressly rejected the first alternative relative to the reduction of a part of the defences of Paris, as well as the condition of retaining the garrison of Strasbourg as prisoners of war. He promised to consult his colleagues upon the second alternative of the maintenance of the military *in statu quo* before Paris. This programme, which M. Favre took with him to Paris as the result of our negotiations, and which has been discussed there, contains nothing upon the subject of a future peace, but simply treats of an armistice of a fortnight or three weeks to prepare for the election of a National Assembly, under the following conditions :—

1st, The continuation of the *in statu quo* in or before Paris.

2d, The continuation of hostilities in Metz, and round about Metz, within a distance which shall be determined.

3d, The reduction of Strasbourg, whose garrison would become prisoners of war ; and that of Toul and Bitche, whose garrisons would be permitted to march out with the honours of war.

I think that our conviction of having made conciliatory offers will be shared by all the neutral Cabinets.

If the French Government is determined not to profit by the opportunity offered them, of proceeding to the election of a National Assembly, even in the parts we occupy, this shows its resolution not to get free from the difficulties which hinder the

conclusion of a peace conformable to international right, and not to listen to the public opinion of the French people. Free and general elections would tend to results favourable to peace. Such is the conviction forced upon us, and which has not escaped the attention of those who exert authority in Paris.

I take the liberty of begging your Excellency to make your Government acquainted with this circular. DE BISMARCK.

No. XXX.

REPLY OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

17th October 1870.

SIR,—I do not know when this despatch will reach you. For thirty days Paris has been invested, and its firm resolution of resisting until it obtain the victory may prolong for some time the isolation in which it is now placed. Nevertheless, I do not wish to delay for a day the reply which is merited by the report drawn up by M. de Bismarck upon the interview at Ferrières. I state, firstly, that it confirms my account in every point, except in that which concerns our exchange of ideas upon the conditions of peace, which, according to M. de Bismarck, were not discussed by us.

I have already said that upon that subject the Chancellor of the Northern Confederation met me with a sort of refusal, grounded upon my absolute declaration, "that I would consent to no territorial cession;" but my interlocutor cannot have forgotten that at my urgent request for categorical explanation he mentioned (in case a territorial cession were admitted) the conditions which I have named in the report, viz., the abandonment, on the part of France, of Strasbourg, with all Alsace,—of Metz, with part of Lorraine.

The Chancellor observes, that these conditions may be added to in case of the continuation of the war. In fact, he declared this to me, and I thank him for mentioning it himself. It is good for France to know the extent of Prussia's ambition; she does not stop at the conquest of two of our provinces, she coolly pursues the systematic work of our annihilation. After having

solemnly announced to the world, by the mouth of her King, that she only fought against Napoleon and his soldiers, she is eager to destroy the French people. She ravages their soil, burns their villages, crushes the inhabitants with requisitions, shoots them when they cannot satisfy her requirements, and employs all the resources of science in the service of a war of extermination.

France then need be under no delusion. For her, it is a question of existence. In proposing peace at the price of three departments bound to her by affection, Prussia offers dishonour. France rejects the offer. Prussia intends to punish her by death. This is the clear statement of the situation.

It is in vain to say to her, There is no shame in being conquered, still less in undergoing the sacrifices imposed by defeat. It is vain to add, that Prussia may reclaim the violent and unjust conquests of Louis XIV. Such objections have no meaning, and it is strange that they should be offered. France does not seek an empty consolation in an easy explanation of the causes which have led to her defeat. She accepts her misfortunes, and does not discuss them with the enemy. On the day when she regained the direction of her destinies, she loyally offered a reparation. But this reparation could not be a cession of territory. Why? Because it would lessen our possessions? No; because it would be a violation of justice and right, and of this the Chancellor of the Northern Confederation takes no account. He refers us to the conquests of Louis XIV. Will he go a little further back, to the *status quo* which immediately preceded them? Will he reduce his master to the ducal crown placed under the sovereignty of the Kings of Poland? If, in the transformation which Europe has undergone, Prussia has grown from an insignificant state to a powerful monarchy, does she not owe it to conquest? But during the two centuries which have favoured this vast change, Europe has undergone another of a higher kind than that which determined the division of territory. Human rights have quitted the abstract regions of philosophy. These tend more and more towards gaining the possession of the world; and these rights Prussia tramples under foot when she attempts to force from us two provinces,

while recognising that their populations energetically reject her rule.

In respect of this, nothing better describes her doctrine than the expression of which the Chancellor of the Northern Confederation reminds us: Strasbourg is the key of our house. It is then as a proprietor that Prussia stipulates, and the property consists of human creatures, whose moral liberty and individual dignity she would subject. Now, it is precisely respect for this liberty, and this dignity, which forbids France to consent to abandon the provinces required of her. She can suffer the abuse of force, but she will not add to that the degradation of her will.

I was wrong not to have sufficiently explained my idea upon this point when I said, what I still maintain, that we cannot cede Alsace and Lorraine without dishonouring ourselves. By that I allude not to the act imposed on the vanquished people, but to the weakness of an accomplice who should aid the oppressor in the consummation of an iniquitous act for the purpose of saving himself. Count Bismarck will not find a Frenchman worthy of the name who thinks or acts differently from myself.

And this is why I cannot recognise that a proposition for an armistice, which can be considered seriously acceptable, has been made to us. I ardently desired that honourable means of suspending hostilities and convoking an Assembly might be offered us. But I ask any impartial man whether the Government could accede to the compromise which was proposed? The armistice would only have been a mockery, if it had not rendered free elections possible. Now, an actual duration of forty-eight hours only was offered. During three weeks, Prussia reserved to herself the continuation of hostilities; so that the Assembly would have deliberated upon peace and war during the battle which would have decided the fate of Paris. Besides, the armistice did not extend to Metz; it excluded the revictualling, and condemned us to be consuming our food while the besieging army would have subsisted by the pillage of our provinces. Lastly, Alsace and Lorraine would not have nominated any deputies, for the unheard-of reason that their fate had to be pronounced upon. Prussia not recognising this right, asks us to hold the sword with which she decides their destiny.

These are the conditions which the Chancellor of the Northern Confederation does not hesitate to call "very conciliating;" accusing us of "not seizing the opportunity of convoking a National Assembly; thus proving our determination not to extricate ourselves from the difficulties which hinder the conclusion of a peace conformable to national rights, and of not listening to the public opinion of the French people."

Well, we accept the responsibility of our refusal before our country and before history. Not to have opposed the exactions of Prussia would have been, in our opinion, treason. I know not what may be the fate in reserve for us; but I feel deeply that if I had to choose between the present situation of France and of Prussia, it is the former to which I should aspire. I prefer our sufferings, our dangers, our sacrifices, to the inflexible and cruel ambition of our enemy. I have the firm confidence that France will be victorious. If she is conquered, she will yet remain so great in her misfortune that she will be an object of admiration and sympathy for the whole world. Wherein her true strength lies, there may be her vengeance. The European Cabinets, which have confined themselves to barren expressions of cordiality, will recognise this when too late. Instead of inaugurating the doctrine of mediation, counselled by justice and interest, they, by their inertia, authorize the continuation of a barbarous struggle, which is a disaster for all, an outrage against civilisation. This sanguinary lesson will not be lost upon the nations. And who knows? History teaches us that human regenerations are closely bound by a mysterious law to great misfortunes. Perhaps France needed a great trial; she will emerge from it transformed, and her genius will shine with a splendour so much the brighter because it will have supported her and preserved her from despair before a powerful and implacable enemy.

When you have acquainted your Government with these reflections, fortune will have pronounced her decree. In sight of this great population of Paris, which has been besieged for a month, and is still so resolute, calm, and united, I await, with a firm and confident heart, the hour of its deliverance.

JULES FAVRE.

No. XXXI.

Letter of the Minister of the Interior to the Mayor of Paris upon the Mobilization of the National Guard.

22d October 1870.

To the Mayor,—

Sir,—The decree of the 16th October, and the instructions of the superior commander of the National Guards of the Seine, will have traced the rules which are to be observed in the formation of the battalions of mobilizable volunteers. These rules had already been given in the letter of the Governor of Paris on the 16th October; but at the moment of carrying them into execution I think it may be useful to notice them in detail, and to consider beforehand some difficulties which might cause uncertainty in some minds.

In placing under military authority several battalions of volunteers taken from the ranks of the National Guard, the Government has acted conformably to the desire of the National Guard itself, which is lawfully impatient to co-operate with the army and Mobile Guard in the work necessitated by the tactics of the enemy.

The National Guard, by furnishing to the defence an effective of 344,000 bayonets, can, without weakening itself, offer a valuable co-operation which may decide our fate. In any case, it has never intended to lose its essentially civic character, and the Government desires to preserve it. It is for the deliverance of Paris that the Government accepts its action, reminding it of what is in the heart of all, viz., that by saving our city from the foreigner, we shall deliver the whole of France. Prussia wanted to sacrifice the country within our walls. She hoped to clear our walls at a bound. She has contemplated them for thirty-three days, and is stopped by their defenders. It now depends on us to testify to the new strength we have gained in the feeling of our right, in our union, in the return of discipline, in the strong confidence inspired by our leaders, who are as prudent as they are brave.

In order to do this, generous devotion does not suffice. We

have to struggle against science brought to serve a cold tenacity. We must oppose this by a similar effort, strengthened by our courage and the necessity of saving the country. To send valorous men, badly armed, against mediocre troops furnished with perfect engines, is to yield them to a certain death; and since (thanks to the disorders of the late administration), only one-third of the National Guard has received rapid-firing guns, we cannot ask for the mobilization of a number which exceeds that proportion, and even that is more than enough for the work to be accomplished.

Hence arises the necessity for an exchange of arms, which will encourage union and the love of duty. This must be accomplished by the aid of the mayors of Paris. They daily prove that their patriotism has the power of resolving the most difficult problems. The Government counts upon their intelligence and firmness. The exchange will, first of all, take place in the same battalion; then, if necessary, from battalion to battalion, and from district to district, by the combined concurrence of the mayors, the mayor of Paris, and *état major* of the National Guard.

But, as a preliminary, it will be necessary to proceed to the formation of mobilizable battalions. The articles 1 and 2 of the decree of the 16th October indicate that the recruiting is to be effected by means of voluntary inscription, in a register to be opened in each mayoralty. The decree of the 19th modifies this by authorizing inscription in the battalion, the true centre of those elements which can best prepare this work.

The Government has gravely considered this question of voluntary inscription, and has only decided on it after careful examination. In accordance with the law of March 21, 1831, supported by that of 1851, we might have included in the order therein circumscribed all men of from twenty to twenty-five years. We prefer making an appeal to volunteers, knowing that honour and danger will powerfully stimulate men's minds, and that the country will be served with so much the more heroism that the sacrifice made will not be obligatory. Besides, the labour imposed upon the mobilized corps necessitates physical and moral fitness, which a free vocation can-

not fail to strengthen. They will not be required to share completely the task of the troops, but to second them, to support them in their manœuvres; to replace them, when necessary, in the outposts; vigour, decision, patience are indispensable in the accomplishment of such a task. Those who freely offer themselves to fulfil it will certainly possess these qualities.

The decree does not determine the number of companies furnished by each battalion. The fixing of their effective at 150 men leads us to expect that the numerous battalions will furnish several. Moreover, in pursuance of article 3, we reserve the rights of the companies formed in one of the sorties, and which, in respecting the principle of individual inscription, are ready to enter into this arrangement. All these companies will be constituted by means of a council of the battalion. They will then be grouped in battalions by a committee of the district. The instructions of 19th October regulate the composition of these two institutions.

We have not taken these institutions from the law, which is silent on the point, but from an intelligent and wise practice adopted by the National Guard of the Seine. This was perhaps suggested by articles 79 and 80 of the law of 1831, which intrusts the administration of the legion and the battalion to a council. The National Guard of the Seine has instituted one council to each company, to which is given the appropriate name of family council, of which the captain is president by right, and it is composed of officers and delegates of National Guards. The mission of these councils is to arrange internal differences, and principally to relieve hidden reverses. They have rendered and still render great services; they cannot be too much encouraged. The Government extends them to the battalions, and appoints the captains to direct them,—one delegate to each company, under the presidency of the head of the battalion. This paternal authority will be charged with the organization of the companies themselves, assembled in battalions by the committee of the district, composed of the mayor as president, and the heads of battalions belonging to the district.

The elections will take place in each company and each

battalion in the usual manner, and this gives me an opportunity of reminding you, as the chief commander has already done, that, according to article 37 of the law of 13th June 1851, the heads of battalions are elected by the officers of the battalion, and an equal number of delegates from each company. We have not now to examine whether this mode of election is preferable to that of direct suffrage; it is imposed by the law, and our duty is to submit to its prescriptions as long as they remain in vigour. The battalions thus formed, and provided with such articles of equipment as are indicated in the decree and in instructions, will be placed under the immediate command of the heads of sectors charged with instructing and directing them. It suffices to say, that by thus becoming men of war, they will none the less be volunteers co-operating with the army exclusively in the operations of the siege, and that their special service will end with the siege itself. The Government expects from them an effectual participation in the defence from outside the *enceinte*, from the forts which protect it, and those strategical positions intended to support the movement which is to break through the enemy's lines. This noble and glorious enterprise,—a complement to that which already is entitling Paris to the honour of history,—will prove the valour, ardour, and warlike intelligence of that intrepid youth who burn with indignation at the sight of the Prussian lines which surround us. We have held them back, now we have to crush them; but, in order to attempt this successfully, we must be prepared by instruction, discipline, faith in our leaders. The Paris National Guard must be clearly convinced of the importance of these arrangements; they are indispensable to victory.

The faults of the Empire impose on the National Guard a patriotic duty which it assuredly had not foreseen, but which it accepts with a simplicity full of a grandeur which will render it illustrious before the world and before posterity. It thus heroically replies to the contempt and mistrust of certain statesmen incapable of comprehending civic virtue. It cannot be too often repeated that the National Guard is the daughter of liberty; 1789 is the date of its birth; the first Empire disarmed it; the Restoration disbanded it; re-established in 1830, victo-

rious in 1848, it fell under the blows of Imperial reaction, and when France, threatened by the mad enterprise of the present war, asked, through the Deputies of the Opposition, for arms which might save her, the Ministers, combined with the majority, opposed to the request an insulting refusal; at the last moment they proposed a sham armament of men from thirty to forty years of age. It has required thunder-claps to revive the institution and to enable Paris to hasten to the ramparts, seizing the arms disclaimed by the troops to drive back the enemy. But in these few days what miracles of activity and patriotism have been wrought! While the city was being transformed, and the *enceinte* fortified with impregnable approaches, the devoted men who are placed in its municipalities exhausted themselves in courageous efforts to clothe and equip the citizens who flocked in crowds to the signal of reconquered liberty. They furnished 172,346 "tunics," 156,178 pairs of trousers, 210,503 light helmets, 158,503 blankets, 137,648 pairs of shoes. This was more than half of the immense task. The rest are being furnished. In a little while Paris will contain 344,000 combatants, armed and equipped, without mentioning the 36 battalions of defence, as ready to sacrifice themselves as were their comrades, and co-operating in all kinds of hard and useful labour. Such is the living rampart which the capital opposes to the invaders; and it is not only by her numerical force that she defies the enemy and renders the country invincible, nor by her girdle of steel, but by her soul. Paris united and prepared to die in a sublime *élan* may hope for victory without boasting. She would have gained it under the fire of her walls; she will go to seek it beyond them. But it would be a dangerous delusion to hide from herself the dangers of this enterprise. To recognise and confront them with a steady eye is to diminish them. It was an immense advantage to stop the enemy at the gates. Paris has profited by it,—to reflect, instruct, and arm herself. Having become docile and serious through reason and the spirit of sacrifice, she finds that obedience and method will double her strength; and, resolved only to drive away the foe, she moderates her ardour and consents to follow those who lead instead of hastening on before them and obstructing their path. This is the greatest triumph

of the moral power which has been governing for six weeks, and which will save us. I ask each of my fellow-citizens to do homage to this, by commanding himself, by being his own judge, by taking his reason and his interest as the most certain elements of the discipline to which I urge him.

The battalions of volunteers will give the example of those manly virtues which we have so often invoked against the mockeries of despotism. They will accept without a murmur the fatigue of the drill, the severity of command. Sober, vigilant, devoted, they will anticipate the trial which awaits them, and thus shorten it. Side by side with them, their comrades will emulate their patriotic and military spirit, and, inspired by a holy love of their country, they will together have the glory of raising France, which is for an instant crushed, and of inaugurating a new era of civilisation and liberty in the world.

As for myself, I shall die more than recompensed for my efforts, if, after having had the honour of being for a time their companion in this work, it is permitted to me to see their victory, which will be that of France and humanity.

Accept the expression of my affectionate regards.

JULES FAVRE.

No. XXXII.

FIRST LETTER OF M. MICHEL CHEVALIER TO MR. GLADSTONE.

12th September 1870.

The two following letters were addressed to Mr. Gladstone by M. Michel Chevalier, who has kindly communicated them to me. It appears to me useful to publish them, in order to show by the opinion of so eminent a man that France did not intend to make any territorial concession to Prussia. At the same time they prove that the Prime Minister of Great Britain was led to act not only by the Government, but by those who, being outside of any official sphere, only gave him disinterested advice. If England ever repent of the inaction of her statesmen she will know that they were not without warning.

DEAR SIR,—You write to me on the 6th,—"We pledge our-

selves to watch with anxiety for any opportunity of being useful." Allow me to ask you if this "opportunity of being useful" does not exist clearly at this moment. It is a case of being useful to France, at the same time insuring a glorious peace to Prussia.

After the battle of Sadowa there was a unanimous cry in Europe for a mediator. The capture of Sedan is a much greater disaster than that of Sadowa. It is the clearly expressed and sincere opinion of Europe that it is to the general interest that the various States of which she is composed should be secured from being destroyed or trampled down by another power. It is of supreme interest to Europe for France to remain one of the first powers. It is also to the interest of England, and this to a high degree.

In the year 1870, to reduce all France to the state of a conquered country, like Prussia in 1806, would be a great calamity for France; it would be a misfortune for all Europe, and for England in particular.

In 1806, England felt this with regard to Prussia; how and why should she not feel it for France in 1870? In 1806, England had but little reason for liking Prussia; but through policy she recognised the gravity of the case. In 1870, England has reasons for being attached to France; she has found in her a faithful and sincere friend for a number of years. During six years many interests have strengthened the alliance.

In your desire to preserve equilibrium between the two parties (a desire which, like all that you do, is in accordance with true wisdom), you fear one thing, which you express thus:—"Would it be consistent with friendship to both if we were to interpose before a state of things arrived, in which we could reckon on the likelihood of a fundamental approximation of views between the respective sides, and in which the adoption by us of the propositions of one would not form a positive cause of offence to the other?" It appears to me, my dear friend, that in the present state of things this fear ought to disappear. France knows her own situation. She admits that it is not for her to make propositions which, if made by any but herself, Prussia might interpret as a positive cause of offence. The basis can only be this: No dismemberment of

the old territory. Certainly such a basis has nothing offensive in it for Prussia.

In 1807, when the treaty was made which settled the fate of Prussia, Napoleon took Magdebourg from her. He was wrong, in more ways than one. But if one of the great powers had interposed to request him to leave Magdebourg to Prussia, it would never have occurred to him, haughty as he was, to regard the intervention as an offence.

France, sincerely reconciled to England (I speak of the French people), expects her former enemy, who is now become her ally, to take some fixed course at the present juncture. She would be deeply disappointed if this were not done, inasmuch as she hears that other Governments are disposed to act. If, in such a state of things, while other Governments show willingness to help, England were to remain inactive, the English alliance would lose much ground in France. You who have assisted in cementing that alliance would be much disappointed. All noble men in both countries would be none the less so; but the evil would then be effected.

If the neutrals leave Prussia to follow up her advantages, there will exist, after the war, a power exercising upon the Continent an influence similar to that which Louis XIV. and Napoleon desired to exert. England, which hindered the dominion of Louis XIV. and of Napoleon I. would, against her will, be regarded by the world as having contributed by her inaction to the elevation of this ruling power.

Prussia, once in possession of this rule on the Continent—as she will be if France is crushed and dismembered—will not stop there. She will take Holland, and achieve what she has begun in Denmark. If England offers any objection, she will reply: "These two countries are necessary to us; when we have the valley of the Rhine, we must have the key, that is to say, the mouths of the river. Having a large navy, and a large trade in the Baltic, we must possess the entrance." She may, perhaps, add that the interposition of England in such a case is a "positive cause of offence," a thousand times more than in the case of Alsace and Lorraine. For the conquest of Alsace and Lorraine by Prussia is an affair of caprice. Nancy is as much French as Paris; and the two

capitals of Alsace, Strasbourg and Mulhouse, almost as much. Germany has no interest in incorporating Alsace and Lorraine, which are outside her natural boundaries; while Denmark and Holland, and perhaps Belgium (particularly Anvers), are both commercially and naturally included in her boundaries.

England has a fine opportunity of attaching France to herself, for the latter will cherish an eternal gratitude towards that power which may hold out to her a friendly hand. She is suddenly struck down by fate. The Government which disposed of her destinies has precipitated her in the most imprudent manner into this war, against an adversary who has vast resources, and against whom it is almost impossible to improvise a defence. To release her from this would be an immense service to the nation. The opportunity is none the less fitting for serving the cause of peace, which you love so well; for if France were dismembered to-day, she would remain a cause of war in Europe. She would only aspire to avenge herself; it would be another Poland, but more formidable than that on the borders of the Vistula.

These are the reasons which I venture to recommend to your examination. You are not only an Englishman; you are European; you are human; you bear towards France a sympathy which she returns. These are some of the motives which urge you to intervene for the purpose of terminating this conflict, so frightfully murderous that it revolts humanity. But, even as an English statesman, as leader of the Government of your country, allow me to say that you are deeply and directly interested in preventing France from being crushed, and in so acting that she may put an end to this war in a manner worthy of a great nation upon which the hand of fate is heavily laid, and which is worthy of a great future, and certain to gain it in spite of her disasters.

(Signed) MICHEL CHEVALIER.

No. XXXIII.

SECOND LETTER OF M. MICHEL CHEVALIER TO MR. GLADSTONE.

18th September 1870.

DEAR SIR,—I beg your permission to add one word to what I have already written. I will be brief, desiring to spare your precious time.

Many of your fellow-countrymen seem to have the two following opinions:—1st, That the events of which French soil is the theatre only concern France and Prussia, and that foreigners ought to remain passive, if not indifferent spectators; 2d, that events prove France to be a nation in a state of decay like Spain, and from this it results that the greatness attributed to her some months since was only an appearance. Allow me to examine these two assertions.

The events which are being accomplished concern many nations beyond France and Prussia; they concern all Europe in a high degree; they are the most important for Europe that have occurred since 1815.

In 1815, the balance of power in Europe was constituted for the security and independence of each and all, in opposition to the law which Napoleon I. had established, whose rule subjected all the States of the Continent.

What Prussia is accomplishing to-day in crushing France, is the reconstruction of the Napoleonic system, to the profit of Prussia.

If France once is crushed, the absolute rule of Prussia in continental Europe will be an accomplished fact, at least on the west of the Vistula. Everything will bow to it; Holland and Austria first, then the Scandinavian kingdoms and Belgium, one after the other. Italy, which is nothing from a military point of view (she proved this in 1866), will accept a dependent position. Russia will run a great risk for her German provinces. Puissant Albion may put on mourning for her Heligoland, a part of the sacred soil of Germany. Who could resist Prussia if once France were crushed? She would have the largest army and the one most acquainted with war, and intoxicated with its prodigious victories. She will have what Russia will

lack, and oblige the latter to take in sail, viz., the nerve of war, and money which she will make vanquished France pay. As motives for extending her rule and assuring it, she will have two great moral forces: that of "Pan-Germanism," which she has had the art of breathing into the German imagination, and which has become for the Germans a ruling passion; and the mystic idea that King William has a Divine mission, to embody "Pan-Germanism" in the form of political power, from the mouths of the Rhine to Livonia and Courland.

King William is a Pan-Germanic Mahomet. This kind of man is one of the most formidable when he has found a people to follow him, as is the case here, and as will be yet more the case if Paris is taken and France subjugated.

When such events are taking place, or are being prepared, it appears no more prudent on the part of a third party to remain passive spectators, than it was in 1805 on the part of Prussia to let Napoleon do as he pleased against Austria, or in 1806 on the part of Austria to permit his attack on Prussia. The two powers who then had at heart the interests and independence of Europe were England and Prussia.

I confess that one thing confounds me; it is, that a party among your compatriots shows towards France a feeling similar to that shown in 1810. Truly there is good ground for being reminded of 1810, but inversely, *i.e.* by applying our apprehensions to Prussia, for it is she who causes alarm in Europe now, and not France.

But with her insular situation and maritime force, England has less to fear from the dictatorship of Prussia than have the States of the Continent. Still, when Prussia becomes the arbiter of the Continent, with that severity which is her characteristic, the relations of England with the Continent will be such as shall please Prussia, and she will be neither accommodating nor indulgent. What an effort will then be needed to repair the evil which it would now be easy to prevent, or at least to diminish!

As for the assertion which attributes the defeat of France to her decline, it is entirely without foundation. The late terrible defeats only prove that the prolongation of the personal power for eighteen years has been a great misfortune. Let all help

to free her from this, and she will become what she has been before. In the midst of these frightful reverses, she retains the material of a great and powerful nation, such as you knew her in 1854 and 1855, when she lent you so valuable an assistance in the East. She is not likely to sink into despair. She is at present crushed by fate, and she will rise again—especially, if her ancient allies assist her. She will rise for their advantage as for her own.

Allow me to say one thing more, which I confess is bold. I am about to suggest to you a measure.

The events now taking place, and those which are possible and imminent being so grave, and affecting as they do all Europe, and England herself, to so great a degree, would it not be wise to assemble Parliament for the purpose of deliberating on them? Would not the adoption of such a course be perfectly natural by a Government as parliamentary as yours? It would have the advantage of relieving you of your responsibility. And is there not ground for believing that this act, in itself pacific and impartial, would cause the Cabinet of Berlin and the Germans in general to reflect, and would lead them to take a more moderate course than they would be likely to pursue if left entirely to themselves? The wisdom and practical character of the English Parliament, the first deliberative assembly in the world, would restrain them without in any way offending the German mind.

Believe me, with profound consideration, faithfully yours,

(Signed) MICHEL CHEVALIER.

The near approach of the meeting of the Constituent Assembly here is an additional reason for the meeting of your Parliament.

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